

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
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OUT IN THE STREETS: A STORY OF HIGH AND LOW LIFE IN NEW-YORK.

By N.S. WOOD, (THE YOUNG AMERICAN ACTOR.)



At the moment when it seemed that the poor waif would be trampled under foot, a young man, dressed in a fur-lined coat and a fur cap, suddenly sprang in front of the sleigh and seized one of the animals by the bridle.

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NEW YORK, APRIL 12, 1905.

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Out in the Streets

A Story of High and Low Life in New York

By **N. S. WOOD** (the Young American Actor),

CHAPTER I.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

It was a cold winter night in the city, the streets were clothed in a mantle of white, and the snow was beginning to fall again, lightly at first, but with the promise of increasing in force as the night wore on.

As yet the wind simply moaned as it came up from the river, but before long it would roar and shriek and go sweeping at a gallop through the streets, driving to shelter those who chanced to be abroad.

There were not many people out this cold, stormy night, although the holidays were near at hand, and the brilliantly lighted shop windows were a strong attraction, the bitter air, bleak winds and flying drift keeping most people within doors.

Fortunate were those who had homes to go to on this stormy night, though the rooms might be scantily furnished and many the mouths to be fed. Were it only a shelter from the storm, there was reason to be thankful.

There was one, at least, out in the streets this cold night for whom no cozy home was waiting, for whom no hearth-fire burned warm and bright, for whom no enticing meal smoked on the humble board, for whom no anxious faces peered out into the darkness and the storm.

Out in the streets wandered a scantily clad woman, leading by the hand a little child, buffeted by the wind, blinded by the flying snow, jostled by careless pedestrians hurrying home cared for by none, pitied by none, alone, homeless, friendless.

The stately Cathedral of St. Patrick reared its marble spires to the leaden sky, the snow fell softly upon the roof, whirled merrily about the doors, and was anon glorified by the ruby, golden, emerald and amethystine lights that shone through the windows where saints and martyrs were pictured, beaming down upon the worshipers within, for there were services this night, and many were now scurrying in to escape from the storm.

The poor woman and her child sat down upon the marble steps of an imposing mansion opposite the cathedral as the organ began to peal forth the joyful notes of the Te Deum.

"Oh, mamma, there is a church. Let us go in and hear the beautiful music; it's so cold here," said the child, as the music grew louder.

"Yes," murmured the poor woman, drawing a thin shawl

more closely around the shivering form of the child. "They surely cannot refuse us shelter in such a place."

At that moment a heavy tread was heard close at hand, and a gruff voice said:

"Come, come, move on now. You can't sit here all night. This is no place for beggars."

The woman looked up and saw a policeman glaring down upon her, while he fingered his long night-stick nervously.

"We are not beggars," she replied, indignantly. "I have lost my way and am looking for friends who will shelter me and my poor blind child."

"Blind!" laughed the officer. "A likely story! Well, you can't stay here anyhow, so move on, or I'll lock you up!"

"Come, Florence—come, dear," said the woman, starting up from the step, but sinking down again from cold and exhaustion.

"H'm, drunk, just as I thought!" growled Joe Willard, the policeman, in a heartless tone. "Why don't you go to the station? You'll get there soon enough, I guess."

"What vas der medder oud?" asked a kind voice, as a big, smiling, ruddy-faced German approached the group. "Der ladys was been sick, ain't it?"

"Sick? No, she's drunk," blustered Officer Willard.

"Oh, sir, if you have a kind heart, do not believe him, but assist me in my need. I am looking for my husband's relations, and have spent four days in the search without avail."

"Dot vas a big city, dot Ny Yorick," returned the German. "Dot don't was like some leedle village. Officer, yust hear me once."

The kind-hearted fellow took the policeman aside, put some money in his hand, and said quietly:

"I dinks you made a mistake mit der vomans, ain't it? I saw dot she found a place to sleep, right away once."

"Well, see that you do," snarled the brutal officer, as he walked away, twirling his club.

"Chiminies! I spend all dot sausage money vot mein frau gife me," muttered the German to himself; "und now maybe I was had to walk back, but I don't care neider. I was help de poor womans if I don't got sausage for a week."

"Tell me, sir," said the woman, rising, and putting her hand on his arm, "do you know anyone by the name of Norman in the city?"

"Dot vas your husband's name, my poor vomans?"

"Yes. I was married to Richard Norman, in South Mitchim,

Maine, seven or eight years ago, and lived happily till our child was three years old."

"Und den he die?" asked the German.

"Yes. Our poor Florence became blind, and then my husband was drowned."

"Was dot so? Dot makes me sorry."

"He went out fishing in a boat with one companion, there was a terrible storm, and two days later the boat was found floating in the bay, bottom upwards, the bodies of my husband and friend being never found."

"Ha, dot makes me sorry some more. I vill see if I could do somedings for you."

"For nearly three years a sum of money was sent to me every month from New York, and upon that I have lived until now. Lately, however, the money has ceased to come, and I came to New York with my child to see if I could not find my husband's relations."

"Und you don't could found dem out?"

"No, although I have searched from one end of the city to the other, and now my money is all gone and I have no place to go to, no shelter for my poor, blind child."

"Nefer mind me, ma'am, I was only a poor Cherman, Fritz Strauss was my name, und I keeps a shoe store down mit Fulton street. Here was money. Go und found lotchings for yourselluf, und to-morrow I do someding more for you."

"Oh, sir, thank you very much. I will repay this money, believe me I will. Come, dear, we will—why, where is she? She must have wandered away."

"Ah, dere she is now," exclaimed Fritz Strauss, starting up the avenue. "Ach, mein Gott, der shild vas killed!"

"My child!" shrieked the poor woman.

The blind child was seen at that moment crossing the snowy street, directly in front of a swiftly approaching sleigh drawn by two blooded horses.

At the moment when it seemed that the poor waif would be trampled underfoot, a young man dressed in a fur-lined coat and fur cap suddenly sprang in front of the sleigh and seized one of the animals by the bridle.

"Confound you! Can't you see where you're going?" cried a young man in the sleigh, in an angry tone.

The young man in the street had now checked the speed of the horses, and picking up the child with his disengaged hand, said sharply:

"Can't you see where you are going? In another moment the child would have been under your horses' feet."

"The brat had no business in the street," retorted the other, as he drove away.

The mother of the child, Fritz Strauss, and several persons who had witnessed the incident now came hurrying up.

"Is this your child, madame?" asked the young gentleman, quietly, touching his cap. "I am glad to have been able to do her a service."

"Oh, sir, thank you a thousand times!" cried the poor woman, clasping the blind child to her heart.

"No, do not thank me, but the good fortune which sent me here. But you seem ill and suffering with the cold. Have you no—"

"I have no home—no place to go to in all this great city. This kind German has given me some money to procure lodgings, and— Why, he has gone!"

Fritz Strauss had disappeared, indeed, probably that he might not receive further thanks from the unfortunate woman.

"Well, that may not be enough," said the young man. "Here is more. There is a lodging-house on the side street, three or four squares above. I will see you again in the morning, and arrange to get you permanent employment."

"God bless you for your kindness, sir, and may you never want for a friend. Come, Florence; come, dear."

"Mamma," said the child, "mayn't I kiss the good gentleman for making you happy once more?"

"Yes, indeed you may," answered the young gentleman himself, as he stooped down and kissed the pretty little waif on both cheeks. "Now run along, dear, and save another kiss for me in the morning."

The poor woman and her child then went up the avenue, while the young man crossed the street and entered the elegant mansion opposite the cathedral.

"Mother always told me to assist the unfortunate," he mused, "for as I was kind to others so might I hope that others would be kind to my poor lost sister. God help her this night, wherever she may be!"

At this moment the servant admitted him to the house—the residence of Mr. Maberly, the banker—and as he felt the genial warmth of the luxurious mansion the storm without increased in fury, and the cold became more bitter.

"Out in the streets and on such a night!" he thought. "God save poor Helen from such a fate!"

CHAPTER II.

ABNER SNAGGS OF MAINE.

Mr. Fritz Strauss, keeper of a shoe store down by the Fulton Ferry, in the city of New York, had come considerably out of his way to purchase sausages, and it now behooved him to reach home as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Strauss was Irish, and her temper was none of the best in cases like the present, although otherwise she had as warm a heart as anyone.

"I don't know vat makes mein frau vill dink," mused Fritz, as he turned along Fifty-First street, "but I know vat she vill say und vat she vill do just so well as off I heerd her dis minute. Ven I comes in mitout dose sausages and mitout der money she say, 'Fritz, you loafer feller, I broke der broomstick mit your face,' und den ven I tolt her all about dot poor vomans und der leedle shild she say right away quick, 'Oxcuse me, Fritz, you vasn't to blame, aber why didn't you tolt me about dot vomans first off?'"

"Ach, Himmel, dot vas a queer world. I go to shleep mit der elevator cars und go all de vay up to Fifty-feirst street before I vas know meinselluf, und den I vas try to find some sausage on Fift efenu. Ho-ho, dot vas a pully shoke on me once."

"Vell, I don't vas sorry I met dot poor vomans, und gife her dot sausage money; aber, I must get me home yust so quick like I can, or my wife she——"

"Jee whizz, stranger, can't yew see where yew're going? Gosh darn it, yew've knocked the wind clean aout o' me! jee whizz! if yew haven't."

Fritz, in his haste, and half blinded by the storm, had run into somebody, and this was what the latter said when he recovered his breath.

The German had suffered somewhat from the collision as well, and he now drew a long breath and answered:

"Vy don't you was look out for yourself, too, ain't it? You step all over my onions mit your big feet."

"Waal, I beg yure pardon for it. Tarnation big city this 'ere. Heap sight bigger'n my place. Gee whizz, yew wouldn't run into a man there, 'cause yew don't see one every minute. Gee whizz, but it's all-fired cold, mister, and no mistake."

"Yah, I tink so besides. Off you don't want to buy some shoes I go right away——"

"Hold on, stranger, don't go so fast. Yew know something about this here taown, don't yew?"

"Yah, I know me dot city putty vell."

"Waal, jee whizz! Then yu're just the man I want to see. Say, what's yure name, annyhow?"

"You don't vas been a bunco steerer, ain't it?" asked Fritz, with characteristic caution.

"No, sir; yu bet I ain't. I hate them durned skunks wuss'n I do pison."

"Vell, my name vas Fritz Strauss, und I keeps me a shoe store down by——"

"My name's Abner Snaggs, and I came from way daown in Maine. Jee whizz! but ain't it cold? I say, Mr. Straws, if yew——"

"Nein, dot vos not Straws. I tolt you Strauss once—Fritz Strauss down by dot——"

"All right, Mr. Scouse, but if yew'll——"

"Mein chiminies, you vas been crazy once, Mr. Sniggs. Strauss vas my name, und I keep a shoe store down by dot——"

"Whoa there, Dutch! My name's Snaggs, and jee whizz! I don't allow no one tew take liberties with it! But I say, this here storm gets wuss and wuss, and if yew'll show me tew a good tavern I don't mind standin' suthin' hot while I ax yew a few questions."

"Dot vas der best ting I heerd you say already, Sniggs. Come mit me und I show you dot blace right away once."

The storm had now greatly increased in violence, the wind howling and driving the snow in blinding sheets in their faces.

The electric lights cast a weird glare over the scene, and the fitting shadows, seen through the drifting snow, seemed to be seeking a place of shelter as well as the human wanderers caught out in the storm.

A few minutes later Fritz Strauss and Abner Snaggs sat at a table near a cozy fire in a comfortable back room of a drinking place on Third avenue discussing two big glasses of hot whisky punch.

"Naow, my friend," said the Yankee, when he had taken a big swallow of the enticing beverage before him, "I come daown here from South Mitchim in the State of Maine two days ago tew look fur a gal by the name of Helen Norman."

"Yah, I understood dot. Vere you opect to find der gell, h'm?"

"Jee whizz! durned ef I know! Yew see, she taught skewl at the little red skewl-house at the Corners, and I think a heap of her—me and my Polly did."

"Yah, you und der parrot was tink der gell yust bully, ain't it?"

"Gee whizz! I didn't say nuthin' abaout a parrot."

"Oxcuse me, Sniggs, you sayed dot you und your Polly, und dot vas der parrot, don't it, tort a heap von der gell?"

"Gee whizz, Dutch, but yew make me snicker. My Polly is my wife, yew dunner head."

"Oh, you vas got a parrot for a vife. Ah, I nefer heerd off dot."

"No, she ain't a parrot. Gee whizz! Can't yew get nothin' straight? She's a female woman, and she's my wife, and her name is Polly."

"Vell, I understand me dot, but vere vas der gell?"

"That's what I'm comin' tew. Yew see, she was married in the little brick church at South Mitchim, abaout eight years ago, and three years ago her husband, Richard Norman, was drowned, while aout fishin' in a boat."

"Chiminies!" muttered Fritz.

"Waal, every month since that she's had money sent her from New York. Lately the money stopped comin', and three or four days ago she came on here tew see if she could find her husband's folks."

"Chiminies!" muttered Fritz again.

"Waal, two days after she left the money came, and my Polly she tolt me to rig myself up fast ez I could and come right daown here and find poor Helen and her blind child."

"Chimineddies, I saw me dot vomans und her shild not halluf an hour ago already by dot St. Patrick's Church, on Fift efenu, und der leedle kid was most run ofer by a sleigh wag-on."

"Jee whizz! is that so?" cried Abner. "Child about six years old, woman dark, and not very rugged?"

"Yah, dot vas der vomans, und she tolt me all about dot, how der man was been lost mit der boat upside down in der bay und anoder mans, und der money und all about dot."

"Jee whizz! Dutch, it's the luckiest thing in life I met yew, durn my skin if it ain't. Half an hour ago, you say?"

"Yah, about dot."

"Jee whizz! And whereabouts did yew say it was?"

"Right befront off dot marble church mit Fift efenu."

"Jee whizz! Come, show me the place as quick as yew kin. Yu're the best feller I've met so fur, and durn me if I don't ask yew daown to South Mitchim for a month, any time yew want tu come."

"Yah, I show you dot place," said Fritz. "Chiminies! I dink dot vas der luckiest snooze as efer I took, ven I vent away up to Fifty-feirst street for dot sausage."

"Come on, Fritz, we've got no time tew lose. Jee whizz! but I ain't sorry yew run agin me naow and knocked all the wind out o' me, durned if I am."

Then, out in the streets, into the storm and the darkness, went those two faithful friends of the poor, homeless wanderers, praying from the bottom of their hearts that they might not be too late to save her.

CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND SON.

Harry Farley, the young gentleman who had saved the blind child from being crushed under the hoofs of the team of spirited horses on Fifth avenue, held a position of trust in Maberly's bank on Wall street, and was considered a young fellow of great promise.

He had worked himself up from an errand boy to a position of responsibility, having the confidence of his employers, and the respect and esteem of all who knew him.

He had been sent for by the banker on an errand of importance, and his timely arrival had been the means of saving the life of the poor blind child.

Having seen the unfortunate mother and child upon their way to the lodging-house, Harry hastened to keep his appointment with the banker, having not a moment to lose.

He was ushered into Mr. Maberly's presence, where he remained for half an hour, discussing various matters connected with the bank.

In the meantime, quite a different interview was taking place in the spacious drawing room of the mansion, one large bow window of which looked out upon the avenue.

Just before Harry Farley entered the Maberly mansion there also entered it the young man who had been driving the horses which so nearly ran over the little blind child, Florence.

He was known as Sydney Heaton, and was the affianced husband of Blanche Maberly, the banker's daughter.

As he entered the drawing room a gentleman of distinguished appearance came hurrying toward him, seized him by the hand, and said:

"Sydney, my son, you have come to save me. I feared you might not. What makes you so late?"

"I am not later than usual, father. I went for a spin on the avenue in the cutter, and by the way, nearly upset some ragged brat or other that had no more sense than to try and cross the street ahead of me. The mother made a terrible fuss, and that

young fellow Farley, down at the bank, snatched her from under the——"

"Yes, yes, any time will do for that," interrupted Heaton, Sr., impatiently. "What I have to say concerns the present. Sydney, my son, you must marry Blanche at once, to-night if possible."

"Father, this is so sudden, so unexpected, so——"

"There is every reason for it, and it can be done—it must be done; you must marry Blanche without delay."

"Well, I intend to marry her, of course, since we are engaged, but why need there be any haste?"

"Sydney, my son, if you would save our poor old father from ruin, induce Blanche to marry you at once, to-night, if she will, to-morrow at the latest."

"But why must there be so much haste?" asked the younger Heaton, toying with a rose which he had taken from a vase close at hand.

He would have been called handsome, having regular features and a good figure, and well understanding the art of dressing, but there was weakness in his face, despite its symmetrical lines, weakness that would make him cruel or merciless, even wicked, if his love of self were menaced.

In reply to his son's question, Mr. Heaton drew him to the recesses of the bow window, and said, earnestly:

"I stand upon the brink of ruin, of dishonor. Your marriage can avert the danger, providing it takes place at once."

"What is the trouble?" asked Sydney, quietly.

"I must have money at once, to cover certain transactions of mine, or I am lost. The moment you become the husband of Blanche Maberly you can handle the fortune settled upon her and save me from disgrace. Hesitate, delay the marriage, and we are both ruined, for my name will be dragged in the dust, and the rich heiress will no longer look at you."

It was the last stroke which told best.

Sydney Heaton's self-love was wounded, and the danger to his own prospects appeared to him more than anything that might befall his father alone.

If the ruin was to become a common one, it behooved him to avert the danger at once.

"Money troubles, eh?" he said musingly, scattering the rose petals over the carpet. "How much do you want? Perhaps we can manage to borrow the amount for a few——"

"No, no, it must not be known to a soul. Besides, the sum is too large. I must have twenty thousand dollars in three days or I am disgraced. We are both disgraced!"

No stronger appeal than that could have been made to the weak, selfish young man, who was to marry Blanche Maberly.

"I will do it!" he said, doggedly. "I will make Blanche my wife to-morrow!"

"Heaven bless you, my boy!" cried the old hypocrite, as he pressed Sydney's hand in both his own. "You have taken a load from my heart, you have saved me from disgrace, from a suicide's grave."

"And myself from a deuced bad scrape," thought the son.

"I will leave you now and let you arrange matters with Blanche," continued Mr. Heaton, joyfully. "Make any excuses you will, but do not leave her until she has promised to do what you ask."

The father then left the room, and a few minutes later the son was awaiting the coming of the woman he meant to make his wife upon the morrow.

"This settles things for Helen," he gasped. "Now I am more than ever dead to her. Pshaw! I am safe enough. Dick Watkins is dead or in Australia, and no one else knows my secret."

A gust of wind drove the snow violently against the pane at that instant, and Sydney Heaton stared back in alarm.

At the same time a beautiful young lady joined the young man at the window, and put her hand in his.

It was Blanche Maberly.

Outside the storm raged more fiercely than before, while within all was bright and beautiful.

A poor woman, standing just under the bow window, with a little blind child at her side, glanced up as the wind swept upon them with pitiless force.

It was the same unfortunate whom Harry Farley had assisted.

She had been turned away from one lodging house and another, because they were full, because she was not well dressed, and for no reason at all.

She had returned to the neighborhood of the cathedral, and had asked alms of the people as they came out from service.

She had been refused, threatened with arrest, and insulted, and now, sick at heart and despairing of finding shelter for her child, stood beneath the brilliantly lighted window of the banker's mansion.

Suddenly, as she turned her head to escape the fierce blast, she saw the face of a man in the window, and at the very first glance she uttered a frantic cry and exclaimed:

"Richard, my husband—alive!"

Then, overcome with emotion, the poor woman fell fainting in the snow at the foot of the steps.

As she lay there unconscious, the poor child bending over her, frantic with grief, Officer Willard returned from a tour of his beat.

"H'm! drunk, of course; just what I said," he chuckled brutally. "Now I will run you in for sure. Here, get up!"

At that instant Harry Farley came down the steps.

"What are you doing?" he demanded angrily.

"None of your business! The woman is drunk! I ordered her off before."

The woman recovered as Harry lifted her to her feet, and looked about her in a dazed fashion.

There was no one to be seen at the window now, and the poor woman pressed her hand to her head and whispered:

"My God! have I only been dreaming? Ah! it is you," she added to Harry. "They would not take me in at the lodgings, and so——"

"Never mind," interposed Harry. "The matron at the Tombs is a friend of mine. I will take you to her, and she will give you all the care you need. Come, I will get you a carriage. Why, little one," to Florence, "you are shivering with the cold! Here, take this."

In an instant the handsome young fellow had whipped off his fur coat and wrapped it around the child.

As he did so the brutal policeman stepped forward, raised his club, caught the poor outcast by the shoulder, and snarled:

"Come on, move on, or I'll——"

Quick as lightning Harry sprang in front of the woman, threw off the officer's grasp, and hurled him backward, exclaiming angrily:

"Touch that lady again, you brute, and I will have you expelled from the force to which you are a reproach and a disgrace!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MRS. STRAUSS INTERFERED WITH HER HUSBAND'S PLANS.

When Abner Snaggs and Fritz Strauss reached the cathedral again they found the place deserted, the storm having greatly increased in violence.

"Mein chiminies, Sniggs," said Fritz, suddenly, "I forgot meinselluf. Dot voman's go mit dot lotching. She don't stay out here mit der church all der vile."

"Gee whizz! why didn't yew say so? Where is the lodging-house, anyhow? Gee whizz! I reckon I ain't missed her by very much, anyhow."

Had Abner Snaggs arrived five minute earlier he would have seen her enter a carriage with Florence and young Farley, and drive downtown.

She was so ill that the young man did not dare to take her to a hotel, and a station-house was equally out of the question.

Being well acquainted with the matron of the Tombs prison, from whom he had received many benefits when a boy, and knowing her to be kind and generous, he had made up his mind to take the poor woman to her, that the latter might have the benefit of her motherly care and tender nursing.

Had he known the danger that was to arise from this act of kindness he might have hesitated, but no one can know the future, and so he acted as his heart dictated.

While the carriage was on its way downtown Fritz and Abner were searching the streets near the cathedral for traces of the missing woman, but all to no purpose.

"Py chimineddies, dot was nine by the clock once," said Fritz, suddenly, "und my wife dink I was meredered for dot sausage money. Better you had come home mit me, Sniggs, und make dot all righd mit de old woman."

"Gee whizz! My Polly she gets riled herself when I stay out late, and then when I gets home safe danged if she ain't mad 'cause I wasn't brung hum on a shetter, just like she thought I'd be."

"Come, move on, you fellers," growled a voice. "You can't hang around here all night, or I'll run you in."

It was the amiable Joe Willard, who had addressed the pair, as he came along on his rounds.

"Run us in, will ye?" said the Yankee, with a snort. "Waal, jee whizz, if you try it on me yew'll find yew hev bit off more'n yew kin chaw."

"Mine freund," said Fritz, "more better you should mind your own bizness, ain't it? Mr. Sniggs vas a bad mans, und I advise you to go shlow mit him."

"Well, you don't want to freeze to death, do you?" growled Willard, continuing his weary march. "I just wanted to give you a bit of advice, that's all."

Abner declined the invitation of Fritz to spend the night with him, but promised to look him up in the morning, and with that understanding the two separated.

The next day dawned cold and clear, the storm having ceased during the night.

Not long after ten o'clock Fritz Strauss left his wife and eldest son to look after the shoe store, and went to the bank to draw some money.

The worthy German kept his cash in a bank in Wall street, as that was more convenient, besides enabling him to say that he had made so much money on the street recently, which gave him an air of considerable importance among his acquaintances.

Fritz never had a very large balance in the bank, but he thought more of giving his check for five or ten dollars when buying goods as some who can sign their name for thousands.

Going to the bank was an event of great importance to Fritz Strauss.

He wore his best suit of clothes, put on an old light blue overcoat, once the property of a soldier in the United States army, tied a red woollen muffler around his throat, got out an old silk hat, carefully smoothed it on his coat-sleeve, got into a pair of overshoes, and set forth.

When he entered the bank and stepped up to the paying teller's window he saw a young fellow there instead of the old man who usually occupied the position.

"Good-morning, he said, clearing his throat. "Vill you gife

me ten—mein chiminies! vas dot you? How you get here?" The young man was Harry Farley.

He had taken the paying teller's place in the latter's temporary absence, his usual position being at one of the desks inside.

"Yes, it is I, of course. How much do you want, did you say?"

"You don't know me once?" asked Fritz, in surprise.

"No, I believe not."

"You nefer sawn me before, ain't it?"

"Not that I remember."

"Py cheminies, den, I sawn you once. Don't you remember how you stop dose horses von knocking ofer der leedle kind last nighd, up by dot church?"

"Yes, I remember that."

"Vell, I sawn you meinselluf. Off you hadn't done dot, I do it meinselluf. I vas mit dot vomans yust before dot."

"Why, yes, I remember her speaking of a kind German who had assisted her, but when she turned to look for him he had disappeared."

"Yah, dot was me. I vas in a hurry once. Vere vas dot poor voman's und der leedle shild now once?"

"They are in good hands," returned Harry, quietly.

"Chiminies, I vas glat of dot. I meed a mans last nighd vat know all about dot poor vomans, und vas looking for her since dree days."

"A friend of hers?"

"Ya, I dink so. Hees name vas been Sniggs, von down der gountry, und he tolt me all about der poor vomans. He got some gelt vat a mans send her once."

"Well, if he is really a friend of hers, tell him to call at the Tombs. The woman is there at present."

"Ach, chimineddies! you don't vas send dot poor vomans to chail once?" cried Fritz, in astonishment.

"No, no; she is in the matron's care. She could not get in at the lodging-houses, and as she seemed very ill I took her to the matron, who is a good friend of mine."

"Vell, I see Sniggs once und tell him vot you tolt me. Dot poor leedle kind! I was feel sorry ven I see her mit der streets out, und all der snow. I lose me a leedle shild just like dot meinselluf once, und efers off I vas had six more, big und leedle, I miss me dot leedle kind, you don't know how."

"You have a good heart, Mr. Strauss," said Harry, looking at the check which Fritz had handed him. "Ten dollars? There you are. Excuse me, please. There are others waiting."

"Dank you," muttered Fritz, putting the money in his pocket. "Off I find Sniggs, I tolt him all about dot."

Then the kind-hearted German returned to his shop, and Harry went on with his work in the bank, both thinking of the poor woman they had so strangely met the night before.

When Fritz reached home, his wife met him with:

"Aha, ye lazy Dootchmon, what kep' yez all day?"

"I was been mit der bank once, Mrs. Strauss."

"Sure, that needn't have tuck ye the hull day. Yez haven't such a poile av munny to dhraw out that it takes yez all the mornin' to count it."

"Vell, I meets a friend by der bank and talks mit him."

"Maybe it was your friend Snaggs from the country, ye ould fraud, bad luck to ye and him!"

"Vat you know about Sniggs, my dear?" asked Fritz in surprise.

"I know no good av um, the vilyan. Lave me alone to fix a man like that. Falx, I sint him packin' fasht enough."

"Vot vas dot? You see Sniggs yourselluf once?"

"Yis, I did, bad manners to him, and sint him about his busi-ness, too, purty sudden."

"Vere you saw Sniggs?"

"Right here in this house, the robber."

"Sniggs vas in mein shop. Ach! mein chiminies, I vish I know dot. I vas found out dot vomans."

"Yis, I know all about the woman, shame on ye both for a pair of blayguards; but I sint Mither Snaggs packin', an' if I hear anything from yez about her I'll pit the print av me nails on yer face that way that they'll be there for a week."

"Ach, donnervetter! you vas make a fool mit yourselluf!" cried Fritz, in disgust.

"I have not thin. Sure the mon was here the mornin' and told me, so innocent like, about a woman ye an' him wor runnin' afther lasht night, and thin axin' me had I seen her yit."

"Vell, go on, my dear," said Fritz doggedly.

"Well, I tould him the woman had gone back home again, and the sooner he wint afther her the betther, and thin I flied open the dure, thripped up his heels and sint him eout head forst into the shnow, and I'll do the same be yez, ye murdherin' Dootchman, av yez go rinnin' afther strange women whin yez have a woife at home! Yis, and I'll get a divarce next, and twinty dollars a week besoides."

Fritz said nothing till he had taken off his overcoat, hat, rubbers, and muffler, and lighted his pipe, when he remarked coolly:

"You vas fery shmart, my dear, in your mind. Dot vas a poor vomans mit a leedle plind shild, vot vas looking for her dead husband's friends, oud in der streets. Sniggs knowed dot vomans, vere she comes von, und got money for her. Yust now I meed dot nice young feller vot safe der shild und help der vomans last nighd, und now you turn dot goot Yankee Doodle mans out von de house und he go righd away pack home mit a vild goose chases, und der poor vomans in Ny Yorick once. Mary Ann, I vas been ashamed mit you."

The poor woman was crying now, with her apron thrown over her head, and Fritz smoked on in silence.

"Oh, wurra, phwat makes me so jealous?" she said, at length. "Troth, if I'd only known! And now I've put me fut in it. Ye're a good mon, Fritz, but av yez wud only explain matthers a bit before I git me timper up an' not afther, yez'd save yesilf an' me a heap av throuble. The poor darlints! Find thim, Fritz, and there's nothin' I won't do for thim."

CHAPTER V.

YOUNG FARLEY ASSUMES A GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY.

The afternoon train for Boston and the North that day bore away Abner Snaggs, while the poor woman for whom he was searching lay dying at the Tombs.

At the same time that the train was whisking through town and city, over field and hill, chased by whirling drifts and attended by myriads of smoke, a quiet wedding was taking place in the Maberly mansion uptown, the contracting parties being Mr. Sydney Heaton and the banker's daughter.

At the same time the Australian steamer leaving Melbourne had among its passengers a certain Dick Walkins, supposed to have been drowned three years before off the coast of Maine in company with a man then known as Richard Norman.

At the same time, too, young Harry Farley buttoned his fur coat about him, turned up the broad collar, thrust his gloved hands into his pockets, and set out to walk from the bank to the Tombs, to inquire after the poor woman in whom he had taken such an interest.

The woman lay on a white cot in the matron's own apartments, while little Florence was at play in another room, so that her childish prattle might not disturb the sleeper.

Some one wished to see the matron, and she called in a woman from one of the wards to watch the patient.

This woman had been detained on suspicion of having stolen some diamonds, but was about to be discharged, her husband having succeeded in satisfying the dealers who had brought the complaint.

The woman was dressed quietly, and would have seemed a lady until one obtained a good luck at her face.

Then no one could have failed to take her for what she really was, a shrewd, bold, crafty adventuress.

"Detained in the Tombs," she mused, "while my tyrant of a husband makes good the loss that might have been occasioned by my little speculation in diamonds. Why did he not supply me with money then, so that I might not have been tempted? I married him for money and he knew it, and has no one to blame if I resorted to my old practices when he failed to keep me supplied."

"Now he subjects me to this disgrace and threatens to cast me off, like the high-spirited fool he is, as though I cared for that."

"All I want is money, and if I cannot get it from him I will look elsewhere. Perhaps, to save his good name, he will let me have what I want. He must, or I am not the shrewd Kate Pritchard I have always been."

The woman sat silent for a few minutes and then, listening to the regular breathing of the sleeper, her face suddenly lighted up with an expression of triumph.

"This woman is called an unfortunate," she mused. "Such usually have a history. Perhaps it will be to my advantage to know hers."

Arising, the woman moved noiselessly to the sleeper's side, and seemed to be smoothing the pillows, arranging the patient's toilet and otherwise administering to her needs.

What she did do was to dexterously abstract from the bosom of the sleeper's dress a folded paper and a gold locket.

"H'm! here is a mystery to begin with," she whispered. "The marriage certificate of Richard Norman and Helen—H'm! She called herself Mary Wright when she came here, the matron says. Why does she conceal her real name?"

There was a sound outside, and Kate hurriedly concealed the paper and locket.

An attendant led in a little blind child, and then left her, the child sitting on a low stool near the bed.

"Come here, my little dear," said Kate, in wheedling tones. "What is your name?"

"Florence," answered the child. "But you must not talk, or you will wake my mamma."

"No, your mamma is sleeping soundly," answered Kate. "Won't you come and see me?"

"I can't see you. I am blind," said little Florence, simply.

"Blind!" thought Kate. "So much the better! What is your full name, child?"

"Florence Norman. My papa was drowned when I was a little girl."

"What was your papa's name, dear?"

"Richard, and my mamma's is Helen. Do you think she will get better?"

"Yes, dear, of course," muttered Kate, as she drew forth the locket she had taken from the poor woman.

Touching a spring, she caused the toy to open, and beheld the portrait of a handsome young man facing that of a child.

The sight of the man's portrait aroused strange emotions in the breast of Kate Pritchard.

"Why, what does this—where have I seen—surely that must be—yes, I know it! It is the man who is to marry the daughter of old Maberly, the banker!"

The woman's dark eyes glowed with a fierce fire now, and her bosom heaved with passionate emotions.

"So this is the secret!" she hissed. "Sydney Heaton, alias Richard Norman, is about to commit bigamy! It was indeed

lucky that I came here. There is money in this for me. Only let this woman live, and my fortune is made."

At that moment, in the mansion uptown, Sydney Heaton was receiving with his newly made bride the congratulations of a select circle of friends, while the organ played in soft tones the grand notes of the wedding march.

As Kate Pritchard gloated over her discovery a step was heard, and the matron presently entered.

In an instant the woman's demeanor changed.

From the triumphant adventuress she became the humble prisoner, and her look was meekness itself.

"You are at liberty to go as soon as you please, madame," said the matron.

"Thank you. I will wait a few moments, if you please, till someone comes."

At that moment Harry Farley was shown in, and advanced to speak with the matron.

Kate studied his face attentively and thought to herself:

"What has this boy to do with the affair? Is there more mystery here, or have I been mistaken all the time?"

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Webber," said Harry. "How is the poor woman I brought you last night? Better, I trust."

"No, I fear not. She has not long to live."

"Let me talk to the kind gentleman," cried the child. "I want to kiss him. He told me to save him one for to-day."

Harry caught the child in his arms, and, turning to the matron, said quietly:

"In case the woman dies what becomes of the child?"

"She will be sent to the orphan asylum on the island."

"Suppose I desired to adopt her?"

"You would have to see the commissioners of charities. There is one in the office now."

"Ah! excuse me a moment," said Harry, putting the child down and hurriedly leaving the room.

"Confound his meddling!" hissed Kate, under her breath. "I want that child myself."

"You need not stay any longer, unless you wish to," said the matron, pointedly, to Kate.

At that moment the sick woman suddenly moved, started up in bed and cried:

"Florence, my child, I have found papa! Come—quick!"

The child, blind as she was, flew to the bedside, and was locked in her mother's arms.

In another moment the poor woman fell back upon the bed dead.

"Poor dear," said Kate, "you will come and live with me now, won't you?"

"Excuse me, madam," said the matron, "but you are hardly the right sort of guardian for the child."

"She is my sister's child," hissed Kate, resorting to desperate measures, "and who can have a greater right to her than I?"

"I can!" said Harry, returning at that instant. "The child is in my charge, and I am determined to see that no harm befalls her."

Kate said nothing, but the look she gave Harry Farley boded little good to either him or the child.

CHAPTER VI.

KATE IS BALKED.

Fulton Market presents a busy scene in the early morning, no matter if it be winter or summer.

The long line of stalls with men in white aprons standing ready to serve customers, the swarms of men and women with baskets on their arms, the streams of men and boys hur-

rying to business and the varied sounds within and without, combine to make it one of the busiest places of the city.

The little stands where coffee and cakes are sold do a prosperous business in the early morning, and so do the oyster counters, the newspaper tables and the counters where knick-knacks of all sorts are sold to a gullible public.

Noise, hurry, bustle and confusion characterize the place, and turn where you will, there is nothing else.

Here the passengers are hurrying off the ferryboats, news-boys are yelling, truckmen are shouting, and whistles are blowing; there people are coming and going to market; over yonder women are haggling over the price of corned beef; here someone is excitedly dodging a heavy wagon and trying to catch a street car, while just beyond the cars of the elevated railroad go thundering overhead, adding to the din, already as much as one can stand.

Mr. Fritz Strauss came down to Fulton Market early on the next morning following his visit to Harry Farley, for the purpose of getting the day's supplies.

Just outside the market the worthy man paused to reckon up the things he was expected to buy.

"Let me see once," he mused. "I don't want to forget nothings. Dere vas sausage und red herring, cheese und crackers, soup meat und vegetables, and two custard pies. Chiminies! off dere wasn't enough to make me sick once, I don't said it. Vere I put mein monies once? Swulf, fufteen, dwendy-five, dirty cent. Ach! how I make all dot go in dirty cent? Chiminies! I lose me somedings. Mary Ann, she say don't forget dem pies vatefer you do; aber I don't like dot meinselluf. I like me dot pumpnickel——"

Someone collided with the musing German at that moment, and half of the small change in his hand went clattering to the pavement.

"Go on neow, can't yez see where yez are going?" growled someone. "Faix, I'll run yez in if yez obstruact the streets like thot."

Fritz turned and saw a red-headed policeman confronting him.

"Vere was your eyes, Irish, dot you don't could saw me?" cried Fritz, angrily. "You make humbug mit me, und I lose my money by you once."

"Go on, go on, and don't be clutthering up the streets, or I'll run yez in. There's too many furriners here already."

"Dot vas no reason vy you lose me my monies, Irish," sputtered Fritz, stooping down and trying to recover some of the lost coins.

"How do yez know I'm Irish?" asked the officer. "Denny Flaherty, my nixt dure neighbor, do say that I luk like a Turk."

That was too much for the risibilities of Fritz Strauss.

He laughed till he cried, and then answered:

"By chimineddies, dot was de best shoke off de year. You give me a Christmas bresent off dot, Irish."

Tim, the policeman, did not know that he had said anything funny, however, and was very indignant at Fritz for laughing at him.

"Go on, ye ignorant Dootchmon," he growled, "or I'll run yez in this minyute. How dar yez laugh at an intillijint Irishman? Begob, I'll have yez all——"

"Come, come, officer, that's all right, I guess," said a pleasant voice behind the two disputants. "Mr. Strauss meant no offense, I'm sure."

"Ach, himmel, dot vas dot young feller once," cried Fritz, turning and seeing Harry Farley. "How you do, ain't it?"

"Pretty well, Mr. Strauss, and I have come down early, before going to the bank, on purpose to hunt you up."

"Ach! You don't must call me Mr. Strauss, like you was come to buy a pair of shoes. I was Fritz mit mein friends."

"Well, then Fritz, I want to talk to you about the poor woman——"

"Ya, I tought so. You found out Sniggs once und sent for him?"

"The woman died last night, Fritz," said Harry, solemnly.

"So? und der leedle kind, she don't was die, too?"

"No, she is alive, and it is of her I wish to speak."

"Ach! dot vas a putty leedle shild. It vas been a pity she was blind.."

"She was not always so, Fritz, and perhaps some day her sight may be restored."

"Ya, I like to see dot," said Fritz musingly, as he walked by Harry's side. "Vat you do mit dot shild? Send her mit der country mit dot Yankee Doodle mans?"

"No, I have adopted her, and want you to take her to your house so that your wife can give her the care she needs. You say she is fond of children?"

"Yah, she like dem as nefer vas."

"Well, then, I'll pay you five dollars a week for the child's board, and whatever else——"

"Ach! you make foolishness!" cried Fritz. "Dot leetle kind don't vas eat fife tollars vorth. Mary Ann she took sharge of der leedle kind for nodings."

"No, no, I cannot allow that. I must pay you for her board. If you are sure your wife will take her I will go and get her now if you will come along."

"My wife take sharge of dot poor leedle kind? Sure, my freund, she treat her just like she was one off her own."

"All right, then, we will go and get her at once."

Harry called a carriage, and he and Fritz drove at once to the Tombs.

A few minutes after they entered the gloomy building they came out again, and with them was the little blind girl, Florence.

A woman in black, and closely veiled, who had been standing on the walk opposite for some time, watching the entrance, smiled bitterly when she saw the carriage drive away.

"So, so, the young meddler has kept his word, has he?" she muttered. "Well, Kate, you ought to be smart enough to outwit a boy like that, especially when there is money to be made out of that brat."

Calling a public hack, Kate Pritchard, who had been waiting for just such an emergency, followed Harry's carriage till it stopped before the German's place of business in Fulton street, near the ferry.

"Trapped!" muttered the adventuress. "Now, leave me alone to secure the child and rebuild my fallen fortunes."

CHAPTER VII.

DICK WATKINS RETURNS AND PROMISES TO MAKE TROUBLE.

It was a pleasant day in June, the air was none too warm for comfort, and the whole city lay bathed in the golden sunshine.

At the Jersey City ferry at the foot of Cortland street a boat was discharging its load of passengers, and carriages and street cars were rapidly filling up as the stream of humanity came pouring out of the ferry-house gates.

Among the last to leave the boat was a thickly-built, heavily-bearded man, wearing a rough suit of blue cloth, coarse boots, and a wide-brimmed felt hat.

The man was known as Dick Watkins, and he had just arrived, overland, from California, whence he had come after a journey across the ocean.

It had evidently been some time since Mr. Dick Watkins had been in New York, for he glanced around with puzzled looks as

he walked along Cortland street in the direction of Broadway. "Changed some since I was here last," he said to himself, "but I reckon I've changed somewhat myself, so that if I should happen to come across them I don't care to know, I ought to pass without recognition."

Reaching Broadway at length, Mr. Dick Watkins glanced up and down that busy thoroughfare, seeing many changes, but being only slightly disturbed by them.

"H'm! there ought to be plenty chances fer a feller like me in this town," he mused. "It has its advantages over Australia, and it beats California all out. The police don't know me, and there ain't no confounded vigilantes to dodge."

Mr. Dick Watkins turned down Broadway by the merest accident, for it was immaterial to him which way he went, but the accident proved of the utmost importance to him.

As he reached Wall street he saw a man jump from a car and turn down the busy thoroughfare, walking briskly, as though in a hurry.

Mr. Dick Watkins uttered a low whistle, crossed the street and followed the man, hanging behind a few yards purposely.

"This is a piece of luck, Dick, my boy," he remarked. "So, so, Mr. Richard Norman is still in New York, eh? There must be some attraction here."

The returned Californian quickened his pace so as to keep nearer to the man he was following, the walk being now rather crowded.

Presently, when he had crossed two intersecting streets, the man ahead paused for a moment and exchanged greetings with someone.

"Good-morning, Heaton. Down early, eh?"

"Yes, I prefer to work in the cool of the day in summer."

The two men passed on and Dick Watkins smiled in an evil way as he mused:

"Heaton, eh, and not Norman now? I wonder what's up? Perhaps nothing, and perhaps much. It has always been my experience that when a man changes his name he does it for a good reason, and a reason, too, that he prefers to keep to himself."

"I never was quite satisfied with being hustled out of the country after that supposed case of drowning down on the Maine coast, but as I was wanted for a little bit of smuggling just then, I did not have much choice in the matter."

"Richard Norman came to New York, changed his name, and has evidently done well, while here am I, fired out of California, come overland on emigrant or cattle trains, and not five dollars in my pocket."

"Things ain't arranged right at all, and I'll have to call upon—hello! Well, he has done well, for a fact."

Sydney Heaton had entered an elegant building, the first floor of which, on one side of the wide vestibule, was used as a bank, the name of Maberly, Heaton & Co., being displayed upon the door in large gold letters.

Dick Watkins saw Heaton enter the bank and disappear in a private office, after greeting the clerks pleasantly.

"Banker, is it?" said the returned Australian. "Changed his name, too. Maybe Norman wasn't his name at all. Well, well, there's a reason for all this, and Dick Watkins is not the fellow to let it go undiscovered."

The man stood irresolute for a few moments, and then, as if inspired by a sudden idea, entered the bank.

"I would like to see Mr. Heaton on private business," he said to one of the clerks, a handsome young fellow, who sat at a window near the entrance.

"Mr. Heaton is engaged at present, sir," was the answer.

"Well, I guess he'll see me," said Dick. "Tell him it's important."

"Will you send in your card, sir? Mr. Heaton will probably tell you when he will be disengaged if your business is important."

"Well, it is. I haven't got a card. Give me a slip of paper. Are you his secretary?"

"No, sir."

Dick Watkins wrote his name in a bold hand on a plain card which Harry Farley handed him, and then added:

"Be sure and tell him it's important, will you?"

Harry went away with the card, and presently returned, saying:

"Mr. Heaton will see you in an hour."

"Tell him I must see him at once."

"Some one to see me, Mr. Farley?" asked an old gentleman just behind Dick, outside the railing.

"No, sir, to see Mr. Sydney, sir."

Dick Watkins started, and looked first at Harry and then at the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir; your son, sir," he muttered, and then to himself:

"He's the very image of Dick Farley, eh? By Jove, he looks like— I wonder if there is anything in this?"

The elder Heaton passed beyond the railing into a private office, and Harry said to Watkins:

"Sorry, sir, but Mr. Heaton is very busy."

"I can't help it," said Dick Watkins, doggedly. "I must see him; must—do you understand?"

Harry went away again, and soon returned with the answer that Mr. Watkins was to follow him.

"I don't like the fellow's looks," thought the young man.

"He does not appear like a very heavy depositor."

Harry ushered Watkins into Sydney Heaton's private office, the banker saying to him as he left:

"Run over to the Seventeenth National Bank, Mr. Farley, will you, and see if Jerome & Co. have deposited the money due on their note?"

"Yes, sir."

"Farley," mused Dick Watkins. "There is a look, a certain resemblance."

"Well, what do you want?" asked Heaton, when Harry had gone and his visitor had seated himself in a luxurious, leather-covered arm-chair, with one leg thrown across the other.

"You ought to know that without asking," was the answer.

"What brought you back?"

"A ship and a railroad train."

"I paid you to stay away. You have not kept your part of the bargain."

"Foreign parts don't agree with me."

"Well, what do you want now?"

"Money."

"What for?"

"Holding my tongue."

"It is immaterial to me whether you hold it or not, Mr. Dick Watkins."

"It is, eh? Suppose I tell somebody that one Richard Norman, supposed to have been drowned three years ago, is Mr. Sydney Heaton? Suppose I tell this to Mr. Farley?"

Heaton flinched for an instant and then answered:

"Of what possible interest can this be to Mr. Farley?"

"A good deal, I fancy. Perhaps you have not seen any resemblance in him to a certain lady who——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Heaton. "You have found a mare's nest. Farley was born and brought up in the city. It is a mere coincidence."

"Maybe so," said Dick. "Anyhow, I want a hundred dollars till we see whether it is or not."

"Not a dollar."

"All right, my friend," said Watkins, rising. "Perhaps you will wish by and by that you had negotiated with me. Do you know when the train leaves for South Mitchim? I think I'll go there."

"You may go to perdition if you like!" hissed Heaton.

"Thank you. I think I will wait until we can make the trip together. It's always best to have company."

With this wise remark Mr. Dick Watkins left the banking-house repulsed, but by no means beaten, if his determined looks were any indication.

"He is stronger than I thought," he mused, "but that even is worth knowing."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURNED AUSTRALIAN STRIKES A RICH LEAD.

Wall street has its attractions for women as well as for men, and the proportion of the former who speculate in the rise and fall of stocks is larger than many would imagine.

As Dick Watkins turned up Wall street, after leaving the bank, he presently beheld a well-dressed woman enter a broker's office a few steps in front of him.

"Well, I never," muttered Dick, "there's another of my friends. I wonder if Kate has gone into the banking business."

Taking a position on the opposite side of the street where he could watch the broker's office, Dick waited till the woman came out, and then followed her up to Broadway.

"Well, this is a run of luck," he mused. "First my old chum, Richard Norman, and then my lively sister Kate. Speculating, is she? That'll be good for me if she gets anything out of it."

"They say women make the keenest speculators, and Kate ain't behind the rest. Guess she'll give her dear brother something if I ask her right. I can't live out in the streets, of course, and I could make it hot for Kate if she didn't keep me supplied, and consequently I'll brace her till I can get a hold on Heaton, as he calls himself."

The woman entered a car at Broadway, and Dick Watkins followed her till she reached an uptown street, down which she turned toward the East River.

Dick Watkins was a perfect sleuth-hound, and the woman did not leave his sight until she entered an apartment house below Fourth avenue—one of a long row.

He observed the number, and after waiting a few minutes crossed the street, entered the vestibule, and examined the bells and letter-boxes.

"Pritchard, eh?" he mused, as he found the name. "Taken her former name and living in a flat! What does that mean? Has she given the doctor up, or has he found her out and cast her adrift? This looks different from what I supposed it would."

He then went away and made inquiries at the stores in the neighborhood concerning a certain Mrs. Pritchard, who, he was informed, lived somewhere about.

He claimed to be a friend of her husband's, who wanted to find her and pay her some money due her, and put his questions very adroitly.

In this way he learned that Mrs. Pritchard was a rich widow, that she paid her bills regularly, was reported to own several houses, and was a most worthy woman.

"Guess she must have changed since I knew her then," thought the man. "Money, eh? Then I want some of it."

It was now early in the afternoon, and Dick Watkins, having had nothing to eat since morning, felt decidedly hungry.

He had a few dollars in his pocket, and feeling sure that Kate would not go out immediately, found a restaurant, ordered his dinner, and began to think of a plan of operations.

"It won't do to see her until I take stock of the kind of nest she's got," he mused, "and now how can I get out of it while I investigate?"

He remembered the name of the broker whom Kate had visited, and that gave him just the clew he wanted.

"If she has been speculating, as I suspect, that will be just the thing. That will keep her away an hour at least, and that ought to be long enough for my purpose."

The next thing to do was to find a telegraph office not too near the house, and from here he sent a dispatch as follows:

"Mrs. Pritchard. Have important points. Come at once.
"Ruggs."

Twenty minutes afterwards he saw the dispatch delivered, and in ten minutes more Kate left the house in great haste.

Ten minutes later Dick Watkins entered the vestibule and rang one of the bells at random.

"Who's there?" a voice called down the tube.

"I want to see Mrs. Pritchard."

"Top flat on the left. Can't you see?" and there was a sharp click and the door flew open.

Dick Watkins entered, closed the door and climbed to the top of the house.

The flats were small ones, and Mrs. Pritchard's was on the left, as Dick soon ascertained.

He tried the knob, looked through the key-hole, took out a knife with several blades and a number of queer little appliances and softly whistled.

Then using the heaviest blade as a pry, or "jimmy," he succeeded, by a quick movement, in opening the door.

"That was easier than I expected," he said gayly, as he entered and closed the door.

The flat had three rooms, a kitchen, a little parlor, and a bedroom, the parlor being in the front of the house.

It was elegantly furnished, and Dick took in the various details as he entered.

There was a lady's writing-desk in one corner, an upright piano opposite, a cozy lounge and a small center-table, upon which stood a handsome lamp.

The curtains, carpets, and furniture were of the finest description, and Dick smiled as he glanced around.

"This is better than a fisherman's hut or a miner's cabin; and now to see where she keeps her cash."

It was no trouble to open the little desk, which had a turn-up lid, and which, when lowered, disclosed a number of pigeon-holes and two or three drawers.

Hurriedly examining the contents of the pigeon-holes, which proved to be mostly letters, some dunning, some very affectionate, and one or two relating to business on Wall street, Dick next turned his attention to the drawers.

There was no money to be found, but in one was a long envelope marked "Heaton Affair," which had as great an attraction for Dick as the sight of a thousand dollars would have had.

The envelope contained papers, one a marriage certificate, and the rest newspaper clippings.

"Hello! this is a find!" exclaimed the returned Australian, excitedly. "The marriage certificate of Richard Norman and Helen Farley, clippings describing the marriage of Sydney Heaton and Blanche Maberly, December 19th last, report of the death of a poor woman by the name of Mary Wright in the Tombs, same date, and a note in pencil.

"Ho, ho! here's a rich lead!" and Dick Watkins whistled. "My dear sister has been putting two and two together. Mary Wright was a name assumed for the occasion. Helen Farley was the real one. Heaton was married at four o'clock, Helen Farley died at half-past.

"Well, this explains how Kate obtains money for Wall street speculations. She has returned to her old trade of blackmailer, and finds it profitable, I should judge.

"Well, I want these papers. If Kate can make money with

them so can I," and Dick Watkins put the envelope containing the precious papers in his pocket and once more whistled.

"Dick, my boy, you've made a haul, and if you don't profit by it you're a flat," and, closing the desk, Mr. Dick Watkins lighted a cigar, stretched himself on the lounge and proceeded to enjoy himself.

Ten minutes had been spent in this occupation, when a key was heard to turn in the lock, the outer door flew open, and Kate Pritchard came in, her face aflame with rage.

She uttered a slight scream at seeing Dick, and then recognizing him, said angrily:

"So, so, it was you who sent me on that wild-goose chase?"

"All is fair in love and war, my sweet sister."

"How did you get in here?" demanded Kate, furiously.

"By means best known to myself."

"What do you want?"

"Money."

"I have none."

"Borrow some from Sydney Heaton, and give it to me," and Dick laughed.

"What do you know of him?" asked Kate, blanching. "What can there be between you and him?"

"Much. I knew a part of his secret. I have discovered the rest."

The woman seemed to have a sudden intuition, and, running to the little desk, she hurriedly opened and examined it.

"You wretch!" she screamed, "you have stolen my papers. Give them to me, or I will have you arrested as a thief."

"I think not," laughed Dick. "How would you like me to tell the doctor that——"

"That threat is harmless," sneered Kate. "My husband and I have parted."

"Perhaps, then, if I informed the police of New Orleans that Kate Watkins, alias Pritchard, who poisoned her husband in——"

Kate would have fallen had she not clutched at the desk.

"What is it you want, villain?" she scarcely whispered.

"Money," said Dick. "A little will do, for I expect to have plenty soon. I also want your oath to keep silence, and then I will molest you no more."

"How much do you want?"

"One hundred dollars."

"Take it, and never let me see you again, Dick Watkins," cried the adventuress, as she threw a roll of bills in Dick's face. "You have been my evil genius. Never trouble me again."

Dick pocketed the money, laughed lightly, and left the place.

"I have still my trump card left, if I can obtain the child," hissed Kate, when he was gone. "Dick knows nothing of her, but once let me get her in my hands and it will be worth a fortune to give her up."

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. PRITCHARD'S LITTLE SCHEME AND HOW IT WORKED.

Several days after the interview with her rascally brother Kate Pritchard went down to the banking office of Maberly, Heaton & Co. on business.

Prior to her arrival, however, Dick Watkins put in an appearance.

He was better dressed than he had been on his first visit, for he knew the value of a good personal appearance.

On this occasion he did not wait to be announced, but, with characteristic effrontery, walked directly into Sydney Heaton's private office.

"Good-morning, Mr. Richard Norman," he said, carelessly.

"Hush! Don't mention that name," gasped Heaton. "Are you around here yet?"

"Yes, and I mean to stay around till you pay me to——"

"I will pay you nothing!" hissed Heaton, suddenly drawing a revolver upon his too persistent caller.

Quick as Heaton had been, Dick Watkins was quicker, and the banker found himself looking down the barrel of a revolver scarcely before he had drawn his own.

With a sudden wrench Dick tore the weapon from his grasp, and growled out:

"I've been in California, Syd, where they are taught to shoot sudden. Don't try any of that funny business on me. Put up your gun and talk business."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Money for my silence."

"On what subject?"

"The marriage of Sydney Heaton to Blanche Maberly while his wife still lived."

"Still lived?" repeated Heaton. "Then Helen is dead and I am free!"

"Who told you that?" growled Watkins.

"Ha, ha! if Helen is dead, you can do nothing. So you have been to Maine?"

"Helen is dead—sure enough," said Watkins, doggedly, "but she was not dead when you married the banker's daughter, and I have the proofs. Would you like to see them?"

Thereupon he placed the documents he held before the other's eyes, taking care, however, that the latter did not seize them.

"I will not submit to further blackmail," hissed Heaton.

"I think you will pay me to go away and keep quiet," returned Dick. "How will you make your living when old Maberly and his daughter, knowing what I do, cast you off?"

The shot was a telling one, for Sydney Heaton was too weak to give up his wickedly-acquired wealth, when doing so would interfere with his pleasures.

"I paid you to keep away once," he said petulantly.

"It is worth more now," was the quiet answer.

"Well, give me your promise to go away forever and I will give you a thousand dollars."

"It isn't enough."

"How much do you want?"

"Five thousand."

"Call to-morrow for an answer."

"Here?"

"No, it is too public."

"Where then?"

"In Union Square, at nine in the evening."

"All right," and Mr. Dick Watkins went away.

As he was leaving the bank a pleasant-faced woman entered, leading a little child of six years by the hand.

"Hello! that face is familiar," thought Dick. "It is the face in miniature of Helen Farley. Can this be her child? Ho, ho, this thing will bear looking into."

As Dick passed out into the street the child said to her companion:

"Oh, Mrs. Strauss, do you know what day this is?"

"Sure, I do, Florence, darlin', it's Friday, I know, because I had herrin's fur breakfast."

"No, I don't mean that. It's my birthday."

"So it is, dear, and that's phwy I brought ye here, so yez could see Harry. Ye're very fond av Harry, ain't ye, darlin'?"

"Yes, I am, for he is so good to me."

"Well, dear, you shtand right here till I come back, and don't yez stir a step till I bring Harry to ye. I'm goin' to get some money for Strauss and thin I'm goin' 'round the corner to pay a bill, but I'll be right back."

The good woman then placed Florence on a bench, went to

the teller's window, and obtained her money and then left the bank.

As she went out Mrs. Pritchard came in, and observed the child.

"Ah, I'm in luck, muttered the woman. "I will attend to this business first of all."

She hurriedly left the bank, spoke to a cabman standing near, and then returned to Florence.

"What a pretty child," she said softly. "Come and kiss me, dear. I love little children. Won't you come with me and let me buy you some nice candy and fruit?"

"I mustn't go away till Mrs. Strauss comes for me," said the child.

"Oh, that's all right. I saw Mrs. Strauss and she said you could come, dear."

"I do not believe you," persisted Florence, "and I do not want to go with you."

Kate bit her lips and looked savage; then, glancing about and seeing that she was unobserved and that the way was clear, suddenly seized the child in her arms, put a handkerchief over her mouth, and hurried from the bank.

A minute sooner and she would have succeeded.

As she reached the outer hall Harry Farley came up the stone steps from the street.

"Where are you going with that child?" he demanded.

At the same moment he put his hand on the woman's shoulder.

"Only to buy her some candy and fruit," said the baffled adventuress.

"Is it necessary to seize her in your arms to do that?" asked the young man. "Put her down at once, or I shall call the police."

"You are making a great fuss over nothing," said the woman, sneeringly, as she put Florence down.

"I remember you now," said Harry. "You are the woman who wished to adopt her. What your motive is I do not know, but I am certain that it is not a good one. Go, or I will hand you over to the police."

"Don't distress yourself, young man," said Kate, scornfully. "You are making mountains out of mole-hills. Nobody wants to hurt the brat. Good-morning to you, and better manners, my polite young friend."

Then the disappointed woman sailed out of the building with a haughty air, and Harry returned to the bank.

"You will not let the naughty bad woman take me away, will you, Harry?" asked the child, putting her hand in his.

"No, dear, I will not. You are mine now, and no one shall part us."

CHAPTER X.

HARRY HEARS NEWS AND SO DOES HEATON.

"Jee whizz! if this ain't the hottest day sence the summer thet the red meetin'-haouse was struck by lightnin'! Talk o' comin' tew the city fur pleasure in such weather as this! Jee whizz! but ain't it hot!"

Mr. Abner Snaggs, of South Mitchim, Maine, had arrived in New York in the afternoon of one of the hottest days of the year.

He was in the city for pleasure, but he did not seem likely to obtain it if the weather remained so scorching hot as it was then.

"Jee whizz!" continued Snaggs, as he walked down the street from the railroad station. "It it was like it was the last time I was here, I wouldn't mind it, durned if I would. Reckon I'll go daown tew the shore fur a day or tew and cool off."

Leaving his belongings in a hotel near at hand, Abner took

the elevated road as far as Fulton street, and descended to the street.

He had hardly done so when a voice exclaimed:

"Chiminies! how you was, Sniggs? Dis don't was like de day last vinter vat we meet, ain't it?"

"Look here, stranger, my name is Snaggs, and—waal, jee whizz, if it ain't Scouse!"

"Strauss, my friend, you make a leedle mistake."

"Yas, and jee whizz! your wife made a big mistake when she sent me kitin' back to South Mitchim that day, tellin' me that Mrs. Norman hed went. My Polly, she said she would just like to pull her ears fur it, by gum."

"Yah, dot vos a great mistook, I dink so myself, Sniggs."

"Snaggs, you Dutch sassage!"

"Ya, I tink so. Vell, dot poor vomans gone die de next day."

"Jee whizz, you don't say!"

"Ya, und Mr. Harry, vot vas in der bank he took dot leedle shild und put her to my house to board. Poor leedle kind, she was blind, but she was so good like gold already."

"Who took her to bring up?" asked Snaggs.

"Dat Harry Farley, I tolt you. He vas in dot bank by Wall street, and he find dat vomans dot cold night out in der streets."

"Jee whizz! If that ain't jest what my Polly would call the hand of Providence. Harry Farley, hey? Why, the poor gal's name was Helen Farley. He must be the little brother she used tu tell abaout."

"Chiminies! You don't told me dot. Come mit me right away off mein house. De leedle shild vas dere, und Harry he come himselluf to took supper mit us dis efening."

"Jee whizz! Is that so? Then we'll make a reg'lar family party of it, won't we? Jee whizz, but wouldn't my Polly like tu be with us? Waal, yu bet!"

"Ya, I dink so meinselluf, Sniggs. Chiminies, dot vas a puddy hot day, don't it?"

A few minutes later Snaggs was shaking hands with Mrs. Strauss, and holding Florence on his knee while she told him what a good boy Harry was, and how she loved him.

She recognized the kind countryman at once, and Snaggs could scarcely restrain the tears as she prattled on in her innocent way.

In the evening Harry came to see Florence and take supper with Fritz and his wife, but hardly prepared for the surprise in store for him.

When Snaggs was introduced he took Harry's hand, and, looking him straight in the face, said:

"Waal, jee whizz! if he ain't got Helen's face and eyes and all, and to think he didn't know her."

"What do you mean?" gasped Harry.

"Why, the poor woman that you found out in the streets and took care on!"

"She gave her name as Mary Wright."

"Waal, she was Helen Farley, and married Richard Norman and lived to our place nigh on to four years, and you're her livin' image, jee whizz if yu ain't!"

"And Florence is her child?"

"Yes, and the puttiest little creetur I ever see."

"Then I have a claim upon her after all? Thank heaven for that. Poor Halen, I did not dream that she was the poor woman I met. How she must have changed! But then I had not seen her since I was a little boy."

The evening which followed was one of the happiest which Harry Farley had ever spent, and he went home with a lighter heart than he had carried for many a day.

Early in the next week Sydney Heaton came to the bank one morning with a troubled expression on his countenance.

Dick Watkins had extorted money from him, and threatened to make an exposure if more were not forthcoming.

Besides this, he had received a letter from Kate Pritchard,

threatening the same thing and promising certain further disclosures which he could not dream of.

In addition to all this, his wife had accused him of coldness, of neglecting her, and of having married her for money alone, and, little love as there had been between them before, there was still less now.

That was not all, however, for the bank had met with losses, and a panic seemed imminent, and, to crown all, the elder Heaton came in during the forenoon and said:

"Sydney, I must have money at once, or I am ruined."

"I don't know where you are going to get it, then," said Sydney, impatiently.

"Borrow it of your wife."

"Impossible! She has given me all she will for the present."

"Get it from the bank, then."

"The bank cannot stand it. Several large failures have already weakened us, and to take more would ruin us."

"But I must have fifty thousand or I shall be ruined."

"I gave you a large sum six months ago. What did you do with that? You promised then not to indulge in questionable transactions."

"I didn't come here to be lectured or preached to, Sydney," answered the old man, petulantly. "Do you want to see my name dragged in the gutter? Do you want to see me laid in a suicide's grave? Ruin to me means disgrace to you. I tell you you must get me the money or I am lost!"

"How am I going to do it? I tell you the bank is itself in danger."

"Alter young Farley's books, send him out of the country, and let it appear that he has defaulted, anything to get rid of him."

Even Sydney Heaton could not listen to such a proposition unmoved.

"Commit forgery, charge another with my crime?" he gasped, greatly shocked. "I won't do it."

"Is it better that he should be ruined or you?" sneered old Heaton. "He is young and can recover his name in a foreign land, but you will be ruined."

"I cannot," muttered Sydney.

"You must. It is as easy as talking about it. A few lines on his books, the money gone from the bank, the thief out of the way, everybody will believe him guilty."

"Except the real criminal!" sobbed Sydney, sinking into a chair and covering his face with his hands.

"Nonsense! I have no time for sentimental rubbish. Send him to California on some pretense or another, and then declare him guilty of robbing the bank. He will be arrested, unless he takes fright and escapes, and if so we can send him away quietly after the thing has ceased to make a noise, and we are safe."

The old hypocrite actually smiled as he mapped out this infamous plot against an innocent man.

"Whatever is done must be done at once," continued old Heaton. "In two days it will be too late."

There were other dangers threatening Sydney Heaton, and Harry Farley himself pointed some of them out to the sadly harassed man.

"Mr. Farley," said Sydney to the young man in the course of the day, "I am much pleased with your progress since you came to us. Have you any prospects in life beyond what the work in the bank might bring?"

"I hope that I may one day go into business for myself," answered Harry. "I have my little niece to support, as well as myself, and——"

"Your niece! Is that the child that I see here sometimes?"

"Yes, sir; she is my sister's child. Her mother is dead, and her father too. He was drowned three or four years ago."

"What was his name?" asked Heaton with an effort.

"Richard Norman. My sister's name was Helen. She died

here in the city last winter. She came here to find her husband's relatives, and Heaven guided her steps to me. Since then I have taken care of her poor blind child."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," returned Heaton. "I think I may be able to better your position here, Mr. Farley," he added. "I will speak about it again in a day or so."

"Thank you, Mr. Heaton," said Harry, as he left the room.

"Helen's brother!" gasped Heaton, when alone. "My child, too! Does Dick Watkins know this? The boy must be sent away, and at once. Better his ruin than mine. Yes, I will do it, and get rid of Watkins at the same time. How fortunate I discovered this when I did!"

CHAPTER XI.

HARRY RECEIVES A SURPRISE.

That afternoon, when the bank had closed, Sydney Heaton called Harry Farley into his private office and said:

"Mr. Farley, I promised you this morning that I would try and better your position in a few days. I have the opportunity of doing so now."

"You are very kind, sir," returned Harry.

"I have some important business to transact in San Francisco, and I wish to send someone whom I can trust. I feel that I can place perfect reliance upon you, Mr. Farley, and that is why I intrust the mission to you. Do not tell anyone where you are going, and be prepared to leave by to-morrow. I will give you your instructions at that time."

"I will be ready," said Harry, "and again I wish to thank you for your trust in me."

"Attend faithfully to this matter, Mr. Farley," continued Heaton, "for upon your conduct in this will depend your future."

"I will do my best," was Harry's answer, "and I trust that you will have no fault to find with me upon my return."

"Upon his return," mused Heaton, when Harry had gone. "He will never return, and I will be safe."

Harry was very much excited at the prospect of going away, and the advancement in store for him upon his return, provided he had been successful in his mission.

His life had been a hard one, leaving home at fifteen, working his way without the aid of father or mother, and rising step by step until he now held a place of trust and responsibility, and this new opportunity for advancement was therefore hailed by him with no little pride.

He would be enabled to show his employers that he could be trusted, that he was not afraid of doing hard work, and, by doing his strict duty, would advance one stage further upon his road to fame and prosperity.

It was no wonder that he felt elated, for now he seemed about to grasp the reward of many years of patient toil and firm adherence to the work given him to do.

After leaving the bank, he hurried around to the home of Fritz Strauss, to see Florence and tell his friends of his good fortune.

He told him that he was going away for a few days on business connected with the bank, but did not mention where, adding by way of explanation that it would probably prove a good thing for him.

"You will come and see me when you get back, won't you, Harry?" asked Florence.

"Yes, dear, and you must be a good girl till then," answered the young fellow, kissing the child.

"Sure, we'll all go and bid yez good-by at the thrain," said Mrs. Strauss, "and I'll put ye up some foine lunch, so ye'll not be hungry on the way to where ye're going."

Fritz seemed to be very much amused at this, and said:

"How you 'spose Harry would like to be sawn eatin' corn beef sandwiches und salt pickles in der cars, my dear? You was make him ashamed mit himself."

"Jee whizz! that won't be so bad as what happened to me," said Snaggs, who was present. "My Polly she put me up a lunch once when I was goin' to Boston, and great guns, ho, ho, ho!"

"Ya, dot vas ferry funny," said Fritz. "But maybe off you tolt us more off dot, we lafe more, ain't it?"

"Why, jee whizz! she put in a lot of apples and doughnuts, and the bottom of the bag busted out and the apples went rolling all over the floor, jumpin' and bouncin' like Sam Hill, and all them high-toned ducks in the car got tu laughin' and, jee whizz! I felt so 'shamed that I didn't let on as the things was mine at all. Jee whizz! but didn't the train-boy have a feast that day! Waal, I jest guess!"

"Sure, I'm not afeard that Mr. Harry will be ashamed av annything I give him," protested Mrs. Strauss earnestly. "Will ye neow, darljnt?"

"Indeed I won't," said Harry, with a smile, "and you are all very kind to think of me. I do not know yet when I am going, so I would not make preparations too soon."

While Harry was bidding his friends good-by, Sydney Heaton was waiting for Dick Watkins in a shaded corner of Union Square.

At last the man came and Heaton drew him aside, saying earnestly:

"I am going to send young Farley to California, and I want you to follow and see that he doesn't return."

"All right, Syd, I'll see to it. Where is he going?"

"Do you know of a good person to send him to?" asked Heaton, by way of answering Dick's question.

"Yes, an old pal of mine, Rube Sturgis. Give the boy a letter of introduction to him."

"Is he in San Francisco?"

"No, but I know where he is likely to be, and I can telegraph him to go to Frisco and meet the boy. Your letter of introduction can be really the instructions to Sturgis."

"Very well. You must follow and do the rest. I want that child that he thinks so much of taken there at the same time, and you must therefore go later than he does."

"You don't want him killed, do you?" chuckled Watkins.

"No—no, of course not, but I do not want him to return to New York. You understand?"

"Perfectly, and I suppose you'd just as lieve that I wouldn't come back neither."

"It would be as convenient to me if you did not," returned Heaton, dryly. "In fact, I propose to make it worth your while."

"I'll fix the boy," said Watkins. "I know a place in the mountains where he can be kept for years, if you like, and no one be any the wiser. As for the kid, she can be sent down to the Indian country, and no one needn't hear nothin' more of her."

"You haven't got her yet, remember."

"No," said Dick Watkins, mutteringly, "but I'll get her. Leave that to me, Syd."

"When will you be ready to start?"

"To-morrow night if you say so."

"Make it the next morning. You had better let young Farley have a day's start of you in case anything happens to detain him. He will leave to-morrow at ten."

"Very well. You won't forget the money for my trip, in addition to what you promised me?"

"No, no," answered Heaton, impatiently. "Come, I must be going. I will see you again to-morrow, early, mind, for I must have Farley's instructions all made out."

"We can attend to that now," said Dick. "There is a quiet place over on Third avenue where we can fix it up."

The two then went away, and as they did so a woman came out from behind a clump of bushes and gazed scornfully after them.

"So, so, that wretched brother of mine wants to get the child, does he?" she mused. "That will interfere with my own plans."

"It was fortunate that I chanced to be passing here and overheard them. Heaton must have recognized the child, and, of course, he does not want her around where there would be danger of her being seen by his wife."

"His wife! Ha, ha!" and Kate Pritchard laughed. "She is not even that, for he was still married to the other. Perhaps if I tell her I might make something out of it."

"No," she murmured, after a pause, as she listened to the dying footsteps of the two men. "That will not help me any. I must obtain the child. She will be my strongest weapon against him."

She walked slowly out of the park, but as she reached the street, a new idea seemed to impress her.

"Perhaps, after all, I will make more by espousing the young fellow's cause, warn him of his danger and of the child's, and urge him not to go away. Yes, I will do it, and baffle Dick Watkins yet."

Then, as she hurried to her home, her new resolution seemed to have taken full possession of her, and she appeared to have already triumphed over her enemies, her look was so hopeful.

It was no love for the right, or pity for Harry Farley that animated her, however. She thought only of her own gain, and selfishly imagined that a sinister motive could be excused if only good were done, a mistake which she was by no means the first to make.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT DICK WATKINS ACCOMPLISHED AT THE STATION.

The waiting-room of the New York Central Railroad, in the great depot at Forty-second street, was a scene of the utmost activity and bustle.

People were buying tickets, others were crowding around the doors waiting for them to open, friends were exchanging parting handshakes and good wishes, cabmen were shouting outside, dilatory travelers were hurrying in with boxes and bundles, and the din was terrible.

"Jee whizz! I wonder if I'm tew late, after all!" exclaimed Abner Snaggs, as he came in, wiping his perspiring forehead with a red bandanna handkerchief. "That gosh-blamed watch of mine had tew stop, and I'll bet a cookie that that blasted train has gone an' I hain't had time tew say good-by."

Abner looked around the room, wiped his face again, and finally pushing his way through the crowd around the door, said to the official he found there:

"Say, mister, has the train to Chicago gone yet?"

"No, won't go for a month yet. Go sit on a block of ice and cool off, country," was the ungracious retort of the bluecoat.

"Jee whizz! Gotter wait a month, hev I?" grunted Abner, as he elbowed his way back through the crowd. "Go sit on a chunk of ice, hey? Waal, thet feller is cool enough, I swan. Gotter wait a month? Jee whizz! that beats all the slow travelin' I ever did see."

"Ach, chimineddies, how you was, Sniggs?" cried a hearty voice, and Abner suddenly felt himself seized by the hand.

"Hallo, Fritz, tha yew? Jee whizz! but I'm durned glad to

see yew. Gotter wait a month, so the more company I have the better."

"Vat vas dose?" asked Fritz, who appeared to be somewhat inebriated. "Who say you shall wait a month? Dot vas foolishness, Sniggs."

"Waal, I'm tarnation glad of it, but, jee whizz! that pesky critter over there said so, and I thought he order 'know.'"

"He vas gife you humbug, Sniggs. You was sawn Harry already?"

"No, and it's hot as blue blazes in here. Come aout and get a lemonade with an iceberg in it."

"Ya, I dinks dot vas pooty good meinselluf. I hafe me sefen or eighd lemonades already, only dey don't got icebergs mit dem. Dey vas shticks."

"Ho! trees I guess," cried Abner with a chuckle. "Jee whizz, Dutch, yu'd order live daown in Maine. You'd want tu come up to York once a week tu git full."

"Ya, I don't tink so meinselluf once," answered Fritz, as he took Abner's arm to steady himself.

As the two cronies were passing out, however, Mrs. Strauss, leading Florence, met them.

"Where are yez going neow, ye ould Dootchman?" the woman asked angrily. "Sure, it's nearly time for the thrain to shtart. Phat did yez do wid the little basket av lunch I pit up for Harry?"

"I was go after dot, my tear," said Fritz. "I leafe him mit a friend off me around der corner by der shtaple."

"No, ye don't, Mr. Fritz. Ye are going to have another drink wid Snaggs. Ye'll not have anny more. Ye've had a dozen already, and I'll not let yez go on to thirteen. It's on-lucky."

"Oh, Mrs. Strauss, there's Harry," cried Florence. "I hear his step."

"God bless the darlint," murmured the good woman. "She can't see him, the poor little crather, but she do know his futshtep, and among so manny, too, the Lord love her."

Harry Farley came hurrying up the steps at that moment, kissed Florence, shook hands with Mrs. Strauss, nodded to Abner and Fritz, and said:

"There is plenty of time, for I have my seat engaged in the Pullman, but I wanted to see you all before I went and thank you for your kindness to me and to little blind Florence."

"Troth, yez have no call to mintion it at all, sor," said Mrs. Strauss, hurriedly. "We ought to be thankful to ye for bringin' the darlint to us to cheer us all wid her purty way. It's an angel she is, Masther Harry, and if she only had her soight—"

Harry drew Mrs. Strauss aside and said earnestly:

"I will tell you, Mrs. Strauss, but no one else. I am going to California, and may not be back for weeks. You will watch over little Florence, will you not? You cannot know how dear she is to me since my poor sister's death. I shall see an oculist when I return, for I have been told there is some hope of her sight being restored. You will take the best of care of her now, I know, won't you?"

"Indeed I will, faix, and wud aven if ye hadn't tould me. Now phwere has that husband of mine gone to—he and Snaggs?"

"They'll be here presently," said Harry, smiling. "There, the doors are opening."

"Train for Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, and the West!" shouted the gateman.

The doors were flung open, and a surging crowd poured through, everyone being anxious to be first to obtain seats.

A man dressed like a cabman stood near the street door, watching Harry and his friends.

It was Dick Watkins in disguise, awaiting his opportunity to kidnap the child.

"The Dutchman is drunk," he mused, "and if he gets back

before the train starts he'll be so befuddled and confused that I can manage him and the old woman well enough."

"Neow, thin, where's Fritz?" cried Mrs. Strauss, as the last passengers began to hurry in. "He'll miss seeing Masthur Harry."

As she spoke, Fritz and Abner came in, having slipped away while Harry had been speaking to her.

Fritz appeared to have been drinking again, for he staggered considerably, and a large and heavy market-basket that he carried did not appear to steady him materially.

"Dere vos dot basket off lunch," he muttered, as he placed it on the floor. "I dink you must tort Harry was going away for a veek vere dere don't was some lunch counters, ain't it?"

"You are very kind, Mrs. Strauss," said Harry, smiling and blushing, "but really——"

"All aboard for Chicago, St. Louis, and the West!" shouted the man at the door.

At that moment a lady, elegantly dressed, but closely veiled, came hurrying forward, seized Harry's hand, and exclaimed:

"You must not go on this journey—it will be your death. Sydney Heaton is a wretch and is plotting your ruin. Stay here while yet there is time. Go, and you are lost."

"Madam, I do not know you nor understand your strange warning," answered Harry coldly. "Why you should seek to have me neglect my plain duty I know not, but——"

"I tell you you must not go!" cried the woman, seeking to detain him by force.

The violent effort caused her veil to fall from her face, and Harry recognized her as Kate Pritchard.

"Ha! it is easy to see why you wish me to remain," he said, scornfully. "Good-by, Florence, good-by, friends," he added, hurriedly turning to his companions. "Ah, there goes the gong, I must be off."

He hurried through the door, but even then Kate would have detained him.

She sprang forward, but, at the same moment Dick Watkins hurried up and cried gruffly:

"Arrest that woman! She is a pickpocket!"

Mrs. Strauss screamed, Fritz fell over the basket of lunch, Kate Pritchard struck at Abner as he tried to detain her, an officer came running to the scene, and all was confusion.

When the bustle was at its height, the train bearing Harry Farley being now at full speed, Dick Watkins slipped in, seized Florence in his arms, stuffed a handkerchief in her mouth, threw her into a closed carriage, and drove rapidly away.

His plan had succeeded better than he had hoped.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY HEARS UGLY RUMORS AND CALLS ON MR. REUBEN STURGIS.

Harry Farley was whisked away on the fast express, totally ignorant of the calamity that had happened to poor blind Florence.

His heart was light, and the thought of his improved prospects made him as happy as the day was long, while never an idea of danger entered his head.

He made many friends on the journey, and all whom he met thought him one of the pleasantest young fellows they had seen.

No doubts disturbed him, no fears gave him pain, and as the days passed and he neared the end of his journey his spirits arose as he thought of the chances for bettering his condition when he reached California.

While he was thus hurrying across the Continent, Dick Watkins, twelve hours behind, was speeding after him, thinking of the time when the young man would be in his power.

He had told little Florence that he was taking her to see her grandmother, and as the child often asked when they would reach the place and wondered how much longer they would be, the man resorted to opiates to keep her asleep and prevent her from talking too much.

It did not seem advisable that too many people should see her, either, and whenever it was possible he kept her out of sight, putting her to bed early and not allowing her to arise till late.

At last Harry arrived at San Francisco late in the afternoon, a week after his departure from New York.

As he left the train he bought a newspaper from a boy and almost the first thing that he saw was the following:

"HEAVY DEFALCATION.

"New York, July 20.—The private banking house of Maberly, Heaton & Co., on Wall street, has suffered a great loss from the defalcation of one of its most trusted employees. The loss will reach nearly \$300,000, mostly in cash and negotiable securities. The thief has absconded, presumably to Europe, though some of the detectives think he has gone to California, and the police of San Francisco have been notified. The defaulter's name is Henry Farley, commonly known as Harry. He is a young man of pleasing address, and until now has born an excellent reputation."

Harry read the article to the end without stopping, and seemed scarcely to breathe.

"What does it mean?" he muttered. "Some terrible mistake has been committed. What ought I to do? Telegraph to New York or return by the next train?"

He walked along, absent-mindedly crushing the paper in his hand and trying to think what was best to do under the circumstances.

"There are my instructions," he mused. "I had better call on Sturgis at once and explain. God knows I am innocent of this charge. Perhaps I had better give myself up, return to New York and demand the proofs against me. First of all, though, I must see Sturgis and find out what he knows. Perhaps it is all a mistake."

The address given Harry was a small hotel in the business part of the city, and after making a few inquiries he found his way there and asked for Mr. Sturgis.

In a few minutes he was shown to a room on the third floor, and found a tall, heavily-built man, dressed in a suit of shaggy, brown cloth, awaiting him.

"My name is Farley," said Harry, "and I am from Maberly, Heaton & Co., New York. This is Mr. Sturgis?"

"That's my name," said the big man. "Take a seat. I heard you were coming," and then he arose and locked the door.

"Why do you do that?" asked Harry, laying the packet he had brought on the table.

"Ha, you haven't read the papers, have you?" asked Sturgis, with an unpleasant chuckle by way of reply.

"Yes," said Harry, coloring, "and I pronounce the statement concerning me to be a lie."

"Well, it'll be as well not to let the police know that you're here, at least not for the present," said Sturgis, "and that's why I locked the door."

"When was this statement first made public?" asked Harry.

"Only to-day, I believe. The New York papers will have more of it. They ought to be here in a day or so, and I'd advise you to skip."

"I have done nothing that I should be ashamed of," said Harry, "and I shall demand an investigation."

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable," said Sturgis. "I'll read these instructions."

He opened the envelope and took out a sealed letter, which he opened and read, the contents being as follows:

"New York, July 10.

"Dear Rube.—As I told you, this letter will be delivered by a young fellow named Farley, whom a certain friend of mine is anxious to have put out of the way or kept quiet. You know the old place in the mountains, the deserted mission near the devil's mill race? I think that will be a good place. Hold on to him till I come. The papers here will be fixed so that young Farley will be thought to be a thief. I will bring a prisoner of my own. She is the child of an old pal of mine, Dick Norman; but that ain't his real name. It's Sydney Heaton, and he's married to another gal, and don't want her to know that he's got a kid. I think there's money in the job for me and you. Keep young Farley till I come. Make him think it's the bank's business, and that the coppers are after him. Anyway, don't let him get away, and watch for your old pal,

Dick Watkins."

When Sturgis had read this letter he folded it up carefully, put it in an inner pocket of his waistcoat, took out a cigar, lighted it and puffed away in silence.

Harry had begun to mistrust the fellow, though he could find no good reason for doing so.

"I have taken nothing from the bank," said Harry, "and I am willing to go back to New York and stand a trial."

"I wouldn't do that," said Sturgis quickly. "It'll cost you a right smart sum to begin with, and it may be of no use. Better wait and see how things turn out. You're under my orders, anyhow, now, and I couldn't think of letting you go."

"Then you must prove my innocence, or I will throw up my engagement and go back alone."

"Have you any money?" asked Sturgis.

This was a difficulty which Harry had not foreseen.

"No," he said desperately, "but I will go back if I have to walk, unless this charge is withdrawn."

"Well, you can't do nothing for a day or so, anyhow," said Sturgis, "and there ain't no harm in keeping out o' the way o' the police. They don't understand things half the time, and sometimes they make you trouble just for nothing."

"Then you have received no word from the bank concerning this alleged defalcation?"

"No."

"Couldn't you telegraph them that I have arrived, and ask for further instructions?"

"Oh, yes, I could do that, but there's time enough. Suppose we have supper sent up here? You're hungry, I reckon, and it won't do you no hurt. I'll order a couple o' cock-tails for appetizers to start on."

"I don't drink, thank you," said Harry, as Sturgis arose and rang the bell connecting with the office.

"H'm! we all drink out here," said Sturgis. "You'll get used to it, I reckon. The climate 'll make you want to, it's so invigorating. Let me order a bottle o' wine. That won't hurt you."

At that moment a servant rapped at the door, and Sturgis gave his order for supper to be served in the room as soon as possible.

"Nobody suspects nothing at present," continued Sturgis when the man had gone, "and it's just as well they don't. I'll go out with you after dark, and we'll telegraph to New York and have an answer by morning."

That partly satisfied Harry, and he felt more at ease, although he still had a feeling of distrust toward Sturgis and could not feel that entire confidence in him which he knew he would if all were right.

And now every minute was bringing Dick Watkins nearer

and nearer, while Harry's danger increased as the distance between him and his enemy grew shorter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. RUBE STURGIS ACTS UPON INSTRUCTIONS.

The supper which Mr. Rube Sturgis had ordered made its appearance in about fifteen minutes, and in the meantime the man talked to Harry upon a variety of subjects.

The waiter laid the cloth, and then left the gentlemen to themselves, Sturgis having told him that if they wanted him they would send for him.

Harry had little appetite for the meal, and had it been the daintiest repast that was ever served he could not have done it justice.

The dishes were not of the best, but Sturgis seemed to enjoy the meal greatly as though he were not used to cooking even as good as this was.

"Come—come, boy, you ain't eating nothing," he said. "Try a glass of wine; maybe that'll give you an appetite."

"I would rather not," said Harry, wearily. "I never drink wine."

"Well, I guess you'll drink with me," said Sturgis, filling two glasses with a heavy red wine, "and I'll give you a toast. Here's that you may come out of your troubles right side up."

"I can't very well refuse a toast like that, Mr. Sturgis," said Harry, "but I can drink it in water as well as wine."

"Nonsense!" said Sturgis. "Water is a woman's drink," not a man's. Cheer up, lad. You'll be all right. Come, drink your wine like a man, or I'll think your trouble has made a baby of you."

Thus urged, Harry was about to take up his glass when Sturgis said suddenly:

"Hark! do you hear anyone at the door?"

Harry turned his head and half arose, listening intently.

At the same moment Sturgis took a small vial from his pocket and poured a few drops of a transparent liquid into Harry's glass.

"H'm, guess it wasn't anything after all," he muttered. "Anyhow, it's gone now. Some drunken feller in the hall, I reckon. Drink your wine, boy. You're shaking like a leaf. It'll steady your nerves."

Harry drank half the wine, and then, upon Sturgis insisting that he must drink it all, tossed it off at a swallow.

"There, you'll feel better after that," said the man, refilling his own glass and eyeing Harry silently.

Then he talked upon various subjects, drinking freely, and now and then urging Harry to do the same.

The young fellow did take part of a glassful, but he seemed listless, and began to answer in monosyllables, his mind seeming to be astray.

This feeling increased, until at last he could scarcely keep his mind on anything more than a few moments, a strange drowsiness beginning to come over him.

His eyes closed, and his head drooped, and yet he was not asleep, for he would start as soon as Sturgis spoke.

The man poured some of the liquid from the vial into the wine still left in Harry's glass, and then said sharply:

"Come, ain't you going to drink your wine? It's time for us to go to the telegraph office."

Harry stared to his feet, seized the glass, drained its contents, and then, with a sudden gasp for breath, threw up his hands and fell to the floor like a log.

"Ha! I reckon the stuff has done the business," muttered Sturgis. "He orter sleep till mornin' on that, and maybe long-

er. Anyhow, Dick'll be here then, and we can get him away quiet."

Sturgis then lifted Harry from the floor, and placed him on the bed, where he lay like one dead.

All night he lay unconscious, and in the morning Sturgis received a note from Watkins telling him to come at once to the old place, if everything was all right.

The man took Harry from the house in a closed carriage, hurried him away on a train, and made all haste to reach the rendezvous in the mountain.

He said that the boy was very ill, and kept him out of sight as much as possible, fearing that he might recover and make trouble.

At a lonely station on the road he left the train, taking Harry with him, the young fellow just able to stand, but feeling terribly dazed.

Sturgis borrowed a horse from a man at the little station, a fellow as evil-looking as himself, mounted, placed Harry on the saddle in front of him, and rode off.

At the end of an hour's ride he halted at the foot of a precipitous path, and dismounted.

The scene was wild in the extreme, and was a fitting place for outlaws like Watkins and Sturgis to hide in.

It was a small, deep valley shut in by precipitous cliffs, a mountain torrent came tumbling down from ledge to ledge into a deep pool overhung by rocks, whence it glided away into some underground passage and was lost to sight.

At the height of twenty or thirty feet from where Sturgis had dismounted, the stream was spanned by a rude bridge made of a single log, to which approach was had by a steep and winding path.

The trees arched overhead, and cast a deep shade upon the spot, but at a higher elevation it was more open, and from the little bridge a view could be obtained of the distant mountains.

As Sturgis dismounted Harry appeared to recover his senses, and gazed around him with a look of surprise.

He saw the evil look on the face of Sturgis, who was now dressed in the rough garb of a miner, noticed that his own clothes had been changed, and saw where he was in an instant.

"There has been treachery here!" he cried, springing from the horse. "You have betrayed me—you have——"

Then, as Sturgis laughed cruelly at him, Harry suddenly broke off and sprang savagely at the outlaw's throat.

He was no match for the burly outlaw, reared in the mountains and accustomed to all manner of hardships.

Sturgis uttered a fierce oath and hurled his assailant from him in a second.

Harry reeled, fell to the ground, struck his head upon a stone, and lay insensible.

"Young fool!" growled Sturgis. "Guess he'll know enough not to tackle me agin. 'Spect I've killed him, and I don't care if I have!"

Then he lifted the limp body from the ground, threw it across his back and toiled up the steep ascent to the little bridge.

Crossing this, he followed a narrow path between enormous boulders till he presently came to a solid oaken door set in a wall of roughly hewn stone.

The place was an old, long-deserted mission chapel used by the Jesuit priests a century or more ago, but now given up to wolves and men but little better than they.

The walls were thick, the rooms small, many of them unfit for habitation. The roof was broken in at several places, the floor was damp, the walls were clammy to the touch, and the place savored of neglect, ruin and decay.

The room where Sturgis paused had once been used to receive the guests of the mission, and doors could be seen leading into others.

A broken arch let in the light from above, and a small lat-

ticed window nearly covered with vines served to further lighten the gloom, although not to any considerable extent.

Pushing aside the door, the outlaw threaded his way through several narrow passages, and at last came to a room much smaller than the first, where he placed his burden upon a pile of moss in one corner.

The same evidences of decay showed themselves here as in the outer room, although it was more secure.

From one corner of the place, where they lay rusting and gathering mold, Sturgis brought out some shackles and a heavy chain, and bound the unconscious boy hand and foot.

"That'll keep him from getting away," muttered the man, as he sat down on a stone bench and proceeded to light his pipe.

The rays of the declining sun entered the broken window, where a few panes of stained glass yet remained, and a broad patch of red light fell across the man's face and chest, as though he had been stained in blood.

"Wonder where Dick is?" he mused as the red-tinted smoke wreaths arose above his head. "Time he showed up, I reckon."

"Well, Rube, you've fetched him, have you?" said a voice, and looking up, Sturgis beheld Watkins looking in at the broken window.

"Yes, I got him, Dick, but he cut up nasty, and I had to give him a crack on the head. Reckon he won't get over it very soon."

"You hain't gone and killed him, have you, Rube?" growled Dick.

"Will it make any big diff if I have?" asked Sturgis, eagerly.

"I reckon it will; but come out here, I want to see you. I've got the kid to look after. She's in the room where Dead Gulch Bill passed in his chips a year or so ago; reckon that's safe enough."

"The door can't shut, that's all."

"Ha, that's nothing. The kid is blind."

Sturgis now left the den where Harry lay and joined Watkins in the outer room, a pleasant fire now burning on the hearth and serving to make the place more comfortable.

Here the two outlaws ate their supper and smoked their pipes, while Harry still lay unconscious in his cell in the old mission, happily unconscious of the fate intended for him.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK WATKINS COMMUNICATES NEWS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.

The moonlight streamed in at the window of the cell in the ruined mission, and fell across the face of Harry Farley as he lay stretched upon a pile of moss.

He presently opened his eyes, sat up, and gazed around him in surprise.

The chains upon his wrists and ankles rattled as he moved, and he stared to his feet in alarm.

"What place is this? Chains? An old ruin? What does it mean?" he murmured.

He put his hand to his head, which ached severely, and gradually the knowledge of his position forced itself upon him.

"Yes, I remember," he whispered. "The journey, the accusation, the man at the hotel, the wine—drugged, it must have been—then a time of confusion, then the struggle. Chains? I am a prisoner then, but where, and in whose power? There is a mystery here which I must unfathom."

He walked to the window, and, standing in a flood of moonlight, looked out.

He could see a patch of sky with the moon in it, a few way-

ing branches and a mass of dark shadows, and hear the sound of waters falling, and that was all.

As he stood there gazing out upon the night, the cool air bringing some slight relief to his aching head, he heard the sound of boisterous laughter and then the voices of two men in conversation.

"Well, if he cuts up nasty agin there's only one way o' quietin' him, I tell you."

"Now, now, don't ye be too obstreperous, Rube. He's wuth more alive than dead."

"Maybe so, if he don't get too spunky."

"I tell you he is. I can get more money out of Dick Norman if he's alive than I kin if he ain't."

"Richard Norman," thought Harry. "Why, that is the man whom my poor sister Helen married. What nas this man to do with him?"

"Well, I've had trouble enough with him already," said Sturgis, "and I won't stand no nonsense."

"That is the man I met in San Francisco," mused Harry. "The other is Dick Watkins, who called on Mr. Heaton several times at the bank."

"Well, we'll have to get him to sign the paper," said Watkins, "and then Heaton is clear, and the boy can go where he likes."

"Heaton is clear," repeated Harry. "What can he mean by that?"

The voices had ceased, and at this moment the door grated on its hinges, and Sturgis entered.

"Oh, you've waked up, have you?" he asked in surly tones. "You'll want your supper next, I suppose?"

"Why am I chained here like a dog?" demanded Harry.

"To keep ye out of mischief, and to prevent the officers from catching of you. You must ha' forgot the piece in the paper you read in Frisco?"

"I have forgotten nothing. I have not forgotten that you are a treacherous dog, that you lied to me, that you drugged and carried me away from the city, that you prevented me from communicating with my friends in New York."

"That's all right. I kept you out of harm's way. I didn't want you arrested."

"I could have proved my innocence easily enough. What have you and Dick Watkins in common? I know that he is a scoundrel, and I believe that you are another."

"Cuss you!" growled Sturgis, rushing at Harry with uplifted fist, "I've a mind to brain ye!"

"Take care!" cried Harry, springing back, seizing his chains in his hands and brandishing them above his head. "One step and I will dash your brains out!"

Sturgis paused, while an angry light came into his eyes.

"Don't you come near me," said Harry, still on the defensive. "I know you to be a treacherous hound, and I would as soon kill you as have you come near me."

"Cuss ye," hissed the outlaw, putting his hand on his hip, "I could shoot ye as quick as look at ye, and I will if ye go cuttin' up nasty with me. There's none o' yer friends within a thousand miles and ye want to go easy, pardner."

"Now, now, what's all the fuss about?" asked Dick Watkins, hurriedly entering the room.

"Nothin'," growled Sturgis, "but if the kid is wise he'll take my advice and not go cuttin' up nasty, a-threatenin' them that's stood by him."

"Go and look after his supper, Rube," growled Watkins. "I want to have a talk with the young cub."

Sturgis went away, and Dick, sitting on the stone bench, said:

"There's no use in beating around the bush. Let's come straight to the point. Do you know why you've been brought here?"

"No, though there is some villainy at the bottom of it."

"Well, you're here because it suits somebody to have you here, that's why. Shall I tell you how you can get free?"

"Well?"

"By signing a confession that you robbed the bank of Maberly, Heaton & Co. of three hundred thousand dollars."

"Sign away my honor!" cried Harry. "Confess to having committed a crime of which I am innocent? Never! I would die first!"

"Take care," growled Watkins. "It may come to that. Sign the paper and you are free to go where you will—China, Australia, Europe, South America, anywhere but the States."

"I will never sign it!"

"You better think it over," said Dick Watkins, doggedly. "You might as well understand matters. You ain't wanted in the States, and if necessary to keep you out your life will be taken. It means ruin to Heaton to have you return. What does it matter to you? Go somewhere else, change your name, and start afresh. You are young, and won't mind that."

"So my mission to California was all a blind, a plot to get me out of the way and cover up Sydney Heaton's rascality?"

"Well, that's about the size of it. You're in a tight place, young feller, and the only way out of it is to sign that confession. I've got it with me, and pens and ink, so now——"

"You need not trouble yourself," said Harry, firmly. "I will never sign it!"

"I'll give you till to-morrow," muttered Watkins, "and then, if you won't listen to reason, I'll send you for a walk with Sturgis, on the bridge, in the moonlight."

"Well?" asked Harry, coolly.

"Do you know what that little bridge spans?" asked Watkins pointedly.

"No."

"It crosses a mountain torrent that runs under the rocks and empties leagues away into the river."

"It runs with lightning speed and is called the Devil's Mill Race. Whatever falls into the pool below is carried away, never to be seen again. Do you want to take a trip to destruction by that route, or don't you?"

Harry shuddered, and then recovering himself, asked quietly:

"Is it far from here to the bridge?"

"Far?" laughed Watkins. "Oh, no, it ain't far. Out of this room into the passage, straight ahead for a dozen yards, then into another room, and so out upon the rocks, and the bridge is right before you. No, it ain't far, not near so far as your journey to the next world will be if you don't sign that paper."

"Which I will never do!" retorted Harry.

"I won't take that for your answer now," retorted Watkins. "Better think it over. I'll give you till to-morrow."

"I shall not change my mind," said Harry, firmly.

"We'll see, my lad. You'll change your tune when you go whirling down the Devil's Mill Race, and then it'll be too late. Good-night."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. ABNER SNAGGS COMES TO A SUDDEN DETERMINATION.

Mr. Abner Snaggs was reading his paper one morning days after the departure of Harry Farley for the West when he came upon a certain item which riveted his attention.

"Jee whizz! I don't believe it!" he cried, throwing the paper on the floor. "That boy hasn't stole the bank's

"more'n I have. Jee whizz! I'll go down tu the bank this minute and see about it."

Then he put on his hat and rushed off to the bank without stopping to finish his breakfast.

When he arrived at the place he found a notice on the door stating that the bank would be closed for a few days until its affairs could be straightened, and that it would probably resume business shortly.

"Jee whizz! that's a pretty howdy-du," he muttered. "I'll bet my old butes the boy didn't have nothin' tu du with it. Gosh hang it, I've gotter see somebody, blamed if I hain't. I won't be satisfied with what them newspapers says."

The janitor presently appeared, and Abner took him by one of the buttons and said:

"See here, mister, I want tu see somebody what belongs to this bank."

"You can't do it," said the man.

"Waal, I must see 'em. Hain't Mr. Heaton nor nobody come down yet? Jee whizz! this is mighty important business tu me, this is. I don't believe Harry Farley took that money any more'n yu did, no, and jee whizz, not as much."

"I don't know anything about that," said the man, trying to get away. "But here comes Mr. Heaton now. You'd better ask him about it."

Abner turned and saw a man coming up the steps.

"Jee whizz!" he ejaculated.

"Good-morning, Mr. Heaton," said the janitor, touching his cap.

Abner hurried forward, and exclaimed excitedly:

"Jee whizz, Dick Norman, is that you? Haow yu hev changed."

"My name is Heaton," said the other, trying to pass.

"Waal, jee whizz! It may be Heaton now, but it was Richard Norman three years ago, and yu was the husband of Helen Farley, that boy's sister, and yu needn't tell me——"

"Stand aside, sir. I do not know you," said Heaton coldly.

"Yas, yu du, and I know yu. Jee whizz, I du. What yu done with that boy, Harry Farley?"

"I have done nothing with him, but the officers will do considerable with the young scoundrel if——"

"Neow, jee whizz, yu know yu're lyin', and so du I. The boy never stole no money. He ain't that kind; but a man what'll run away from his wife, and change his name, will rob a bank, and try and put it on someone else, he will, jee whizz!"

"How dare you speak to me like that?" stormed Heaton. "Perkins, will you call an officer?"

"So yu think the boy has gone tu Californy, du yu?" asked Mr. Snaggs.

"He may have gone to Hoboken for all I know or care," returned Heaton.

"Waal, jee whizz! I'll find out where he's gone, or my name ain't Abner Snaggs, and yure's ain't Richard Norman. Yu don't want the boy araound, for fear he might find out something, and so he will, jee whizz! as soon as I find him. Got the little gal took away, tew, didn't yu, so's she couldn't——"

Heaton had entered the bank and closed the door behind him

by this time, and now an officer stepped up to Abner, put a hand on his shoulder, and said:

"Here, here, yez mustn't go to raisin' any ructions here, me mon. If the bank owes ye anny money, ye'll get it if ye'll be patient and hould yer jaw a bit."

"All right, Irish; yu needn't fease yureself over me. I hain't raised no fuss here, and I ain't a-goin' ter, but yu'll see the fur fly some day, jee whizz, yu will."

Then Abner left the bank and hurried around to the store of his friend, Fritz Strauss.

"How du, Dutch?" he said breathlessly. "Seen anything o' Florence?"

"Nein, I don't saw me noding, und Mary Ann she was been cry her eye oud mit dot. Der bolices don't could found yust so much as a hair off der poor leedle kind, und we was all crazy like der dooce. I don't drink me some more beer nefer once after dot. It was me vot lose der poor leedle kind, yust on agcount I get me drunk dot day."

"Yu hain't heard nothin' abaout Harry, I don't suppose?" asked Abner quietly.

"Nein. I don't heerd me noding."

"They say he's run away with the bank's money."

"Shtop a leedle!" cried Fritz, springing up. "Off you come mit my house to aboose dot boy yu better go away once, Sniggs. I don't heerd a word against dot boy once."

"That's right, Dutch, yu stick up for him. I hain't said he run away with the money. Jee whizz, no! it's them pesky skunks up there what say it. But, jee whizz! I'll make 'em prove it, or my name ain't Abner Snaggs."

"Who say dot der boy run away mit der bank, Sniggs? I broke dot snoozer's face?"

"They say so at the bank, and the papers say it; but, jee whizz! I don't believe. It's my opinion that them what's stole the poor blind gal has suthin' tu du with spreadin' these lies about Harry Farley, and if yu catch one yu'll catch the other."

"Phwat's that about Harry?" asked Mrs. Strauss, coming into the room at that instant.

"They say he's stole all the bank's money and gone tu Californy."

"Oh, musha! and he tould me himself he wor goin' to Californy, and axed me not to tell," cried the poor woman.

"Jee whizz! is thet so?"

"Was you tolt der troot, Mary Ann?"

"Yis, it's thrue as I'm standin' here; but I won't believe he shtole the money, not if all the papers in Ameriky said it."

"Gone tu Californy, hey?" repeated Abner. "Then, jee whizz! I'm goin' there tew."

"You go mit California?" cried Strauss.

"Yas'r, I'm goin' tu Californy. If Harry said he was goin' he's went, an' it was tu get him out o' the way so's they could steal the money that he was sent off. Yu don't find fules daown in Maine, 'cause the country's so rugged thet folks has gotter be smart tu get along, and it's my opinion, and I'll stake it agin a million dollars, thet it's the right one, I du, jee whizz!"

"What was dot boy do by California off he don't steal der

bank?" asked Fritz. "Don't he was come back pretty quick?"

"Waal, it's my opinion that they won't let him come back, and that's what I'm goin' out there fur, I loved that boy's sister, Fritz, and I ain't goin' tu see no harm come tu him. Why, if I did my Polly wouldn't never look me in the face agin. Jee whizz, she wouldn't."

"Faix, Mr. Snaggs, ye're an angel, if yez are not good-lookin'," said Mrs. Strauss, "and I hope ye'll find the bye and bring him back safe, yis and the poor little gell too, for me heart is sad afther the darlint."

"Never fear ababout the little gal Mrs. Strauss. That 'ere pesky skunk at the bank can tell me where she is, I'll bet a cooky, and he's gotter, or my name ain't Abner Snaggs."

"I miss me dot leedle kind like eferydings," muttered Fritz. "I was got me blendy more off my own, aber I don't could sleep since dot shild go away."

"Never yu mind, Fritz, we'll get the gal back, but fust we've gotter find Harry, and, jee whizz! I'm goin' tu find him if I hev tu walk from here to Californy and back."

Abner was as good as his word, and started for the West that very afternoon.

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK WATKINS LEAVES CALIFORNIA.

The moonlight shone in at the window of the old mission, and Harry Farley lay on his bed of moss pondering over his situation.

Watkins must have his answer in the morning, but it could be no different from that already given.

"I will not sell myself so cheap," said Harry. "I can die, but I will not dishonor myself."

At that moment he heard a light step on the rocky floor and looked up.

At first he could scarce credit his senses, and thought he must be dreaming.

Standing in the moonlight was the figure of a child, dressed in white, with a mass of golden hair streaming over her shoulders, and her arms outstretched as though seeking aid.

She moved a pace, and the moonlight fell upon her face.

Harry was upon his feet in an instant.

"Florence!"

He sprang forward, seized the child in his arms, and caught her to his breast.

"Oh, Uncle Harry!" cried Florence, "I'm so glad you have found me. I thought I would never see you again."

"Yes, darling, I have found you and shall take you away from this place. Who brought you here, dear?"

"A bad man who said he was going to take me to see grandma, but we were in the cars an awful long time, and I didn't see grandma at all."

"Yes, yes, but who was the man?"

"I heard the other man call him Dick, and they said they would make a lot of money if they kept me away from New York."

"They said that?"

"Yes; and Dick said that Mr. Sydney Heaton would pay them for keeping you away, too."

"Sydney Heaton?"

"Yes, but Dick said he had another name."

"He has?"

"Let me see, it was Richard—Richard——"

"Richard Norman."

"Yes, Richard Norman."

"Her father," murmured Harry. "So, so, he would have killed both brother and child."

"Did you come here to take me away, Uncle Harry?" asked Florence.

"Yes, we will go away soon, but you must be patient a little while, darling. These men are wicked and will try to keep you here."

"But God will not let them, will He, Uncle Harry?" asked the child, innocently.

A flush arose to Harry Farley's face.

"Ah, I had forgotten," he muttered. "I would have trusted in my own strength alone."

Then, folding the child closer to him, he dropped upon his knee, raised his head, and murmured:

"Father in Heaven, protect us, two helpless children, aid me to leave this place and bring the guilty ones to justice."

The sound of hoarse laughter was heard outside as if in mockery to the boy's appeal, and a heavy step sounded on the stone floor.

"'Tain't much he'll eat, but I'll offer it to him," Sturgis was heard to say. "He's got too much spunk altogether to suit me."

"Quick," whispered Harry, "lie down on this moss. They must not see you."

Florence lay upon the moss, and Harry hastily covered her up as Sturgis entered, bearing a jug of water and a tin pan on which was half a loaf of dry bread.

"I've brought yer supper," growled the man, as he placed the bread and water on the floor.

"You can leave them," said Harry, simply.

"Whenever you want to see Dick Watkins, I'm ready to take the word," said Sturgis.

"I do not want to see him, so you need not trouble yourself."

His chains were off, but Sturgis evidently considered him dangerous, for he kept at a distance.

"He won't stand no foolin', so you'd better make up yer mind," he growled.

"I have made up my mind, and nothing that you two scoundrels can say or do will make me alter it in the least."

"Don't yer get too free, young feller," said Sturgis, angrily, coming up to Harry, and pointing a revolver in his face. "If yer do I'll shoot, as quick as look at yer."

"I'm not afraid of you, hound!" returned Harry.

"You ain't?" and Sturgis held the pistol close to the boy's face.

"No!" and Harry stood up to his full height and stretched

out his arms. "Shoot and prove yourself the hound I have called you!"

The outlaw's face was livid with rage, but he could not meet the boy's unflinching gaze.

"Bah! no use wastin' time on yer," he muttered with an angry growl. "Dick Watkins 'll attend to you, young feller, and yer'll be sorry ye didn't take my advice."

Then he dropped his weapon in his hip pocket and turned to leave.

In an instant, as soon as his back was turned, Harry sprang upon him, snatched the weapon from its place and hissed:

"Down on your knees! Dare to utter a sound and I'll blow your brains out!"

Sturgis fell upon his knees trembling with fear, while Harry covered him with the weapon.

"Florence," whispered the lad, "come, we must leave here at once."

The child threw off the covering of moss and sprang into Harry's arms.

"Remember, not a sound as you value your life!" hissed the boy.

Then he lifted the child with one arm and hurriedly retreated.

"Hallo, Dick, an escape!" shouted Sturgis, springing to his feet.

Harry fired upon the instant, and Sturgis fell to the floor.

The boy dashed along the passage, passing some one on the way, reached the outer room of the old mission, and sprang out into the open air and the moonlight.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick Watkins, hurrying to the inner room.

"The young imp has escaped!" cried Sturgis, staggering to his feet, while the blood streamed over his shirt from a wound in his shoulder, "held me up with my own pistol."

"The fiend take him!" hissed Dick.

"Took the kid, too," growled Sturgis, "and there goes a fortune."

"Come on!" roared Watkins, drawing a revolver. "He can't have gone far, and he don't know the way."

The two rushed from the old ruin, down the path, and out into the moonlight.

Harry Farley was seen hurrying across the little bridge over the Devil's Mill Race.

Florence was clasped tightly in his arms, his face was uplifted as if in prayer, and as he sped on his lips seemed to move, though no sound came from him.

Dick Watkins fired, the bullet passing within an inch of Harry's head.

In an instant the boy had crossed the bridge and disappeared in the shrubbery.

"Curse him!" hissed Watkins, rushing forward.

In his haste he did not look to see where he placed his feet, and as he reached the middle of the bridge, he suddenly slipped and fell.

He caught the log with one hand and swung to and fro above the awful chasm while a cry for help arose to his lips.

Sturgis rushed upon the bridge just as Harry fired at random.

The man struck the hand of Dick Watkins and dislodged it, while at the same moment he fell to his knees on the narrow bridge.

There was a shriek of agony as the body of the outlaw shot through the air and then struck the pool below.

In an instant it was whirled onward by the seething waters, drawn into the Devil's Mill Race, and borne out of sight forever.

Sturgis clung to the bridge above in an agony of fear, and dared not move an inch in either direction.

The moonlight, falling upon the seething waters of the pool, revealed no sign of the man who a moment before had fallen into its seething depths.

Harry had now reached the ground at the base of the rocks, and held Florence closer to his heart.

"Save me!" shrieked Sturgis, "or shoot me if ye're a man and put me out of my misery."

An instant's thought convinced the young fellow that as soon as Sturgis recovered his senses a little he could save himself.

"Save yourself, you treacherous dog!" he cried, and then he plunged into the woods, while the roar of the waters still sounded in his ears.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HARRY MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.

Harry had escaped from the outlaws, but his situation was not yet devoid of danger.

He was alone in the mountains, far from any human habitation, he was without money, and he had a delicate child to care for besides himself.

Pushing on through the woods, he soon came to a beaten path which he followed for some distance till he reached an opening, several acres in extent, and higher than the woods through which he had been traveling.

Crossing this he again struck into the woods, but could find no path, and was soon forced to come to a halt.

Gathering several armsful of dry leaves he made a bed for Florence, covered her up warmly, and sat beside her while she slept.

In the morning he shot a small bird with the revolver he had taken from Sturgis, but, having no fire and no means of making one, he was obliged to eat it raw.

Later in the day, however, he came upon the remains of a fire in a little clearing, the embers being still alive.

He soon kindled them into a blaze, threw on more wood and had a good fire going in a few minutes.

Leaving Florence to watch the fire, he went away and had the good fortune to shoot a rabbit which he brought back in triumph.

This, nicely cooked on the hot coals, made their supper, washed down with water from a brook close at hand.

"Somebody has been here lately," remarked Harry, "or this fire would not have been here. It is quite likely, too, that that they will return. Well, if they are not outlaws like Watkins and Sturgis, I won't object."

No one appeared, however, and on the following morning Harry started off again, finding a path which led over a mountain, but as it was the only one to be seen, he thought it best to follow it.

By noon he had reached a point whence he could see the surrounding country for miles, and there, to the south, not more than two miles away, was a railroad, the smoke from the locomotive being seen wreathing in and out among the trees.

"A railroad!" he cried. "Then I shall find human beings at last. I could not stand many more days of this sort of life, and I fear that the poor child it nearly used up now."

Taking his bearings, the young fellow pushed on, following as straight a line as he could, for sometimes the path would disappear altogether, and he would be obliged to guide himself by his instinct.

At the end of five hours' hard traveling he suddenly came to the railroad, but could see no signs of a habitation in either direction.

"It must have been further than I thought," he mused, "and now here it is night and no sign of a house. I shall have to push on further, I suppose, and trust to good fortune."

Poor Florence was so worn out that Harry took her in his arms, and as he walked mile after mile along the track she fell asleep and forgot her troubles.

The moon arose, but still the brave fellow trudged on, half asleep himself, and well-nigh exhausted, but persevering in the face of everything, hoping when to hope seemed vain.

At last he heard a rumble, which grew louder and louder, and then the shriek of an engine sounded in his ears, and he suddenly awoke to full consciousness.

Again he heard the shriek, and then the puff-puff of a locomotive slackening its speed, while the distant clang of a bell sounded clearly on the still air.

"There is a station; a train is stopping. I may be able to reach it in time," he muttered as he hurried on.

Presently he saw the glare of the headlight in front of him, and then he broke into a run, thinking nothing of the burden he carried, but only of reaching the train before it resumed its journey.

He listened anxiously for any sound that would tell him the train had started, but he heard none, and ran all the faster.

At last he reached a little platform, saw the station-house and a number of people standing about, and sank down, utterly exhausted.

Florence awoke, heard confused voices, and cried aloud:

"Oh, don't let the bad men get my Uncle Harry again. I am blind, and he has been carrying me all night."

There was an exclamation of surprise, and then a tall form wearing a long linen duster and a high white hat suddenly broke through the crowd and reached Harry's side.

"Waal, Jee whizz! if this ain't what I call providential! Durn me if it ain't Harry and the little blind gal!"

"Ye know 'em, do ye, pard?" asked a rough-looking man, who appeared to be a miner, coming up to the group.

"Know 'em! Waal, jee whizz! I should say I did! I've traveled nigh onter three thousand miles to find that boy, and if it hadn't a-been fur this dodratted stop, what I've been cussin' about, I'd 'a' missed him, and jee whizz! that'd been awful!"

"Oh, Mr. Snaggs, I'm so glad you've come!" cried Florence.

"So'm I—so'm I, little gal, more'n you think. Jee whizz! I'd ha' gin forty dollars jist naow to hev this old injine go faster, and now I'm durned if I care whether it goes or not. Here, yew, somebody, anybody, hev ye got any coffee or grub or suthin'? 'Pears tu me the boy is jist about petered out."

"Mebbe a little of the old stuff'd help him a mite, stranger," said the miner, offering a flask.

"Dassay it would—shouldn't wonder a bit. Jee whizz, colonel, yu're a friend in need and no dodgin'. Yu're the right sort."

Then, kneeling on the platform, Abner Snaggs lifted Harry's head and poured a few drops of the liquor down his throat.

In a few moments the boy revived, looked around, and seemed to be murmuring a prayer of thanksgiving.

"Waal, neow, thet's suthin' like. Cheer up, young feller. Yu're a bit tuckered, but I'll pull ye through, jee whizz, I will."

"Mr. Snaggs!" cried Harry.

"Yas'r, Abner Snaggs, of South Mitchim, State o' Maine, and right durn glad I am tu see ye. Haow'd yu come here, where'd yu find the gal, how long yu been travelin'?"

"It's a long story, Mr. Snaggs, and——"

"Jee whizz! and yu're dead beat aout, and I'm gassin' away like an old woman, and forgettin' all the sense I ever hed. Here, my boy, there's a sort o' eatin'-house here, and I'll get yu suthin' tu put the sand in ye, if it costs all I got."

"But how came you to be here, Mr. Snaggs?" asked Harry, becoming inquisitor in his turn as Snaggs led him toward the house.

"Why, when I found you'd gone to Californy, and they said yu'd took the bank's money, I jest made up my mind that there was suthin' crooked in the business, and that you'd been got out o' the way to cover someone else's wickedness."

"You were right."

"So I took the fust train I could get and come a hootin', an' now here, when I expects to reach San Francisco in a few hours, along comes word that they's a train wrecked on the track about ten miles west, and that we'll have to wait."

"It was fortunate for me that there was," returned Harry.

"Jee whiz! yu may well say so. But haow did yu git here? Thought yu was in San Francisco."

"I was, but I fell in with my enemies, Dick Watkins and a pal of his called Sturgis. Watkins stole Florence and Sturgis drugged me, and carried me to a den of his in the mountains."

"Dick Watkins, hey? Yes, I know the critter. Used tu be a fisherman, chum o' Richard Norman's, and no accaount. By the way, yu didn't know that Sydney Heaton and Richard Norman was——"

"One person? Yes, I learned that out here."

"Jee whizz! Waal, where's Watkins now?"

"Dead."

"Yu don't say! Waal, waal, yu'll hev time tu tell me all abaout it, fur I'm going East agin by the fust train that comes along, and you're goin' with me, and then, if we don't make it hot for somebody, my name ain't Abner Snaggs, of South Mitchim, State o' Maine."

"My name must be cleared, my sister's child acknowledged, and the guilty punished," said Harry, gravely.

"And so they will be, but jist naow yu'd better eat and drink something, and get braced up. I tell yu, it was Providence fetched me here, and jee whizz, if I wasn't deacon of a congregational church already I'd jine it to-night, jee whizz! I would."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS.

One pleasant day in the fall of the year three persons arrived in the city of New York from San Francisco.

One was an old man with a kind face, but eccentric habits, the second was a handsome, well-dressed young fellow of twenty-two or twenty-three, and the third was a pretty little girl of seven or eight.

"Waal, jee whizz! here we are in York again," exclaimed the old gentleman, as he stepped off the cars, the young fellow lifting the child from the platform to the ground, for she was blind.

"Yes, and it is a mercy that I am here," returned the young man.

"Oh, Uncle Harry," cried the child, "shall I see Mrs. Strauss and Hans and Peter and Gretchen again? Won't that be nice!"

"Yes, dear, and they will be glad to see you again as well."

"Jee whizz! if it wasn't fur separating ye from her, durned if I woudn't take her back to South Mitchim with me; but I s'pose you'd ruther go inter business here in York, and yu'll want her with ye, o' course."

"You are very kind, Mr. Snaggs. Perhaps when I take a vacation I will visit South Mitchim and take Florence with me."

"Jee whizz! that'll be jest prime," laughed Abner. "Whew! what a yellin'! Yu'd thing they was a pile of Injuns let loose, yu would, jee whizz!"

"It's only the cabmen looking for fares," said Harry, with a smile.

The party had reached the street, and the usual scene of confusion around a great railroad station now ensued.

"Jee whizz! I donno when I've rid in a coach," chuckled Abner. "Let's all go daown together an' surprise the Dutchman. Guess he hain't hed a carriage stop tu his place in a year."

"It will be easier, at any rate," said Harry, "though I am not too proud to ride in the street cars."

"Nuther am I, jee whizz! an' I ain't shamed tu ride on a ox-cart or even a swill wagon, but I du like tu put on a leetle

airs once in a while, and this 'ere is one of them times. Come on, and hang the cost."

Harry called a cab and helped Florence in, Abner following, while Harry told the driver where to go.

As they left the station a showily-dressed woman passed them on the way to the waiting-room.

She stared, turned her head, gazed fixedly at the occupants of the carriage, and then went on.

"Young Farley returned, eh?" she mused, "and the child with him. Then Dick's scheme must have failed. Well, if the child is here again, there is money to be made out of Mr. Sydney Heaton. I wonder if I couldn't make it myself."

"The boy will want to avenge himself, and I might help him do it; but then there wouldn't be so much money for me in it. No, I think I will play my own game."

"He will probably take the brat to his friend, downtown, where she was before, while he is looking for work, for it isn't likely he will go back to the bank, and it will be safe enough for me to look for her there."

"Once she is in my possession I can bleed Sydney Heaton afresh, and make him either pay me so much a month to keep the girl out of sight, or a good lump sum to get her out of the way at once."

"I think I will make him a proposal of that kind, but not until I have the child safe. Young Farley refused my help once; now let him get along without it."

Mrs. Pritchard had gone to the station in search of a victim, for the sharpers in a great city are not all men by any means, but now that she had seen Harry she determined to give her whole attention to this new affair.

Kate was by no means averse to picking pockets, robbing green country girls or shoplifting on occasion, but the present business promised larger returns and less risk, and she was therefore quite ready to follow it up.

She merely glanced in at the different waiting-rooms as though looking for a friend, and seeing only a few persons there and none of them likely to be good subjects for her wiles, returned to her flat to lay her plans.

Meanwhile Harry, Florence, and Abner Snaggs were on their way downtown, thinking of the surprise they had in store for Fritz Strauss.

They reached the store in half an hour, and found Fritz trying a pair of shoes on a big Irish woman.

As they entered he looked around, sprang up, rushed forward and cried:

"Ach, chiminedies, Mr. Sniggs, vas dot yourselluf? Vell, vell, Harry, my poy, I was glad to sawn you back, and der leedle kind, too, already. Mein craciousness, you look fine. Mary Ann, my dear, come into der shop once, here was somebody you was glat to see. Peter, Hans, Yawcob, go tolt your moder to nefer mint dot corn beef und cabbage, aber to come right away once mit der shop and sawn her friends."

The good German was terribly excited, shaking first the hand of one and then the other of his guests, and alternately laughing and crying.

"Begob, yez may be mighty glad to see yer friends, Mr. Strauss," protested the customer, "but sure I can't sit here all

day wid one new shoe an me fut, and the other getting cowl'd for want av company."

"Oxcuse me, Mrs. Ryan," said Fritz, "I was busy. I make you a bresent off does shoes off you put dem on yourself once."

"Ye'll do nothing av the sort," said Mrs. Strauss, who came in just in time to hear the last words. "As ye are busy I'll fit the lady me— Oh, wurra! it's Mistor Harry and the darlin' choild, so it is!"

She had no time to try on shoes after recognizing Harry and Florence.

She kissed them both several times, shook hands with Abner till he thought he would have a fit, and became as excited as her husband.

"Faix, I don't know but I'll have to accipt yer offer, Mr. Strauss, and put the shoes on mesilf," said Mrs. Ryan, who was growing tired of waiting.

"Won minyute, me good woman," cried the shoe-dealer's wife. "Sure, yez can appreciate the situation, I think. The young man and the little girrul do be just come back from Californy, where we thought they wor dead, and so it's no wondher we're glad to see thim, though the poor darlint is bloind herself, and can't see us."

"Oh, the poor crather," said Mrs. Ryan, beginning to sob. "Take yer time, Mrs. Strauss—take yer time. Sure, I know phwat it is to meet me frinds afther a long parting, so I do, and I can sympathoize wid ye."

Then the good woman wiped her eyes on the corner of her shawl, and forgot that she had on but one shoe, for she sprang up in her turn, kissed both Harry and Florence, and would have done the same to Snaggs had he not exclaimed:

"Jee whizz, my good woman, I hain't got the least objection to ye-kissing me, but my Polly wouldn't like it, and so, if it's all the same to yu, I guess I'll shake hands."

The affair was thus arranged, and then Fritz's son came in, and fitted Mrs. Ryan to her entire satisfaction, which was further increased when Fritz took half-a-dollar from the price of the shoes.

Then they all retired to the sitting-room behind the shop, leaving Hans to attend to possible customers, while they all talked a once and had the best of times.

"Yez must all shtay to supper," said Mrs. Strauss. "I couldn't think av lettin' ye go to-night. Strauss and meself can sleep in the shtore, the byes can bunk together, and there'll be plinty av room and a hairty welkim for yez all."

"We will stay to supper, Mrs. Strauss," said Harry. "But we must not tax your hospitality too severely. Florence will stay, of course, but Mr. Snaggs and I had better go to a hotel together, and return here in the morning."

"Well, suit yerself, Masther Marry, though it's yersilf knows ye're welkim to shtay a week if yez loiked."

"Ya, my dear, und a mont off dot suited him more better once," added Fritz.

"Yis, so he could, but av yez'll excuse me I'll go and luk afther the dinner. It's not a very high-toned wan, I know, but yez couldn't be more welkim to it av it kem from ther Waldorf-Astoria."

The dinner that evening was the best that Mrs. Strauss could provide.

There was a big joint of meat, smoking hot, a huge dish of boiled cabbage just steaming from the pot, a great pyramid of mealy potatoes, a tray full of white bread, flanked by a big pot of golden butter, coffee enough for all, and a great apple pie, baked in a deep dish, with no crust on the bottom, a luxury imported direct from Ireland by the happy housewife.

There was a royal welcome to all, besides, and not one of the merry party felt a pang of regret.

There were Fritz and his wife, three sons, and two daughters, Harry, Florence, and Snaggs, and there would have been room for more if they had been there.

Fritz and Snaggs kept the table in a roar with their comical remarks, and Mrs. Strauss was not far behind them on the brilliance of her repartee, while Harry thrilled them all with the recital of his adventures in California.

At last the meal was over, and Fritz, Snaggs, and Harry enjoyed their cigars in the sitting room, while Mrs. Strauss and her eldest daughter cleared away the table.

Florence and little Peter Strauss, a youngster of her own age, remained in the store to give warning if customers came, although none were expected at this hour.

It was nearly eight o'clock, and nearly dark, when Gretchen, a girl of ten, came into the store, and suggested to Peter that they play a game of hide-and-seek for Florence's amusement.

Although deprived of the sense of sight, Florence was unusually quick in the others, and she herself challenged her young companions to hide anywhere in the store, promising to be able to find them.

This would be rare sport, for the children were skeptical, and wanted to see if Florence could find them.

They hid themselves, and Peter called out that they were ready, when Florence went directly to the place where he was concealed, and brought him out amid great laughter.

"You don't could found Gretchen," said the boy. "You hear me holler, und dot was der way you find me oud once."

"Hide again and say nothing," laughed Florence, "and I will find you."

Then she sat on a bench near the door, giving Peter time to hide until she counted one hundred.

The boy hid himself behind a chest in the further part of the store, and kept as still as a mouse.

Suddenly he heard a scream of alarm from Florence, and sprang out of his hiding place.

A strange woman, dressed in black and wearing a veil over her face, was just leaving the store with the struggling child in her arms.

"Uncle Harry! Grandpa Snaggs, help!" she screamed. "The bad, naughty woman is——"

The abductor clapped a handkerchief over the child's face and hurried away, just as Gretchen came from her hiding place.

"Run after der womans, Gretchen!" cried Peter, "und found oud vere she vent. I go tell fader und Harry."

A moment later he burst into the sitting-room, exclaiming:

"Fader, fader, a bad vicked womans yust now runs away mit Florence, und go out mit der street."

"My God! the child is stolen!" cried Harry, springing to his feet and seizing his hat. "A woman, you say? Guess it must be Mrs. Pritchard and no one else."

He was in the street in a moment, followed by Fritz and Abner.

"Dere she was, down by dot Fulton Ferry!" cried Gretchen, who had been nearly overthrown by Harry. "I see her went dat way yust now."

"The ferry!" gasped Harry. "Come, we must not lose an instant."

In a few minutes the three pursuers reached the ferry, but neither the woman nor the child was to be seen.

CHAPTER XX.

A RIVER OF FIRE.

For a moment it seemed as if pursuit had been baffled.

Then Fritz saw the Irish policeman Tim, with whom he was well acquainted, approaching.

Fritz hurried up to him and asked breathlessly:

"Goot evening, Tim. Vas you sawn a womans und a child go along dis vay yust now?"

"I did, sor, and she wor carrying the choild. She said it wor sick, but it seemed to me as if it wor the wan that I used to see playin' wid yer childher."

"How was the woman dressed?" asked Harry.

"All in black, sor, wid a black thing over her face phwat hid it intoirely."

"The child has been stolen," said Harry, "and the woman is Mrs. Pritchard, a blackmailer and thief."

"Fajx, she won't get away from me, thin," cried Tom, and he turned back with the rest.

At the Catherine ferry nothing had been seen of the woman, and the search was continued.

At Roosevelt street one of the ferry ticket-takers said that a woman in black and closely veiled, carrying an unconscious child, had passed through only a few minutes before.

"There's a boat in the slip now," cried Harry, throwing down some silver. "We may catch it yet. Come!"

They hurried through, but just before they reached the gates the latter were slammed in their faces.

"Let us through!" cried Harry, shaking the gate. "There's a woman on that boat that has stolen a child."

"Take the next boat," said the man stolidly.

"I'd give you fifty dollars to open the gate."

"It's against the rules," and the man went away.

"A hundred dollars!" cried Harry.

"It's all right, Johnson!" called out the man in the ticket box. "Let 'em go through."

The fellow opened the gate, but it was now too late.

The boat was at the end of the slip, and moving out into the stream, and at the stern stood Kate Pritchard and Florence.

"Too late!" muttered Harry. "Stop! she shall not escape me!"

Hurrying back to the box he asked:

"Is there any way to telegraph to those on the other side, and have the woman arrested?"

"There's a telegraph office on the New Haven pier next to this."

"Wait here a moment," said Harry, as he ran off.

At the telegraph office he sent a dispatch to the ferry master at the foot of Broadway, eastern district of Brooklyn, to detain a woman arriving by the ferryboat Alaska, leaving New York at ten minutes to eight.

Then he returned to the ferry-house and took the next boat, leaving a few minutes after eight.

"I hope we may be in time," he said to Abner, as they all stood on the forward part of the boat looking out upon the river.

"Jee whizz! I'd given five hundred dollars to caught that 'ere boat!" growled Abner. "If we don't get the little gal away I shan't dare to face my Polly never again, I shan't, jee whizz!"

The boat made good speed until nearly across the river, when she was delayed by a string of canal boats moving downstream in the wake of a tugboat.

The delay lasted ten minutes, and Harry was in an agony of suspense, while Snaggs fretted and fumed, and gave expression to his disgust in most forcible language.

"Mein chiminies, off ve don't was been in a hurry," muttered Fritz, "der boat just go like der dooce, aber we was vant to go gwick und she go just like a snail once."

"It's all right," said Harry. "The woman will be detained till we reach there."

He tried to assure himself that such would be the case, but doubts assailed him, and he wished devoutly that they were on shore.

They landed at last, and Harry went at once to the offices to make inquiries.

"We saw the woman," said the gentleman in charge, "and tried to detain her, but she defied us and said we had no authority to arrest her without a warrant."

"Were there no officers around?" asked Harry.

"Yes, but the woman terrorized them. She said the child would die if she did not get medical aid and that——"

"In short, you allowed her to escape?" interrupted Harry, impatiently.

"We could not do otherwise."

"How long ago was this?"

"Not five minutes."

"Did you see which way she went?"

"Toward Greenpoint."

"But for that delay on the river, we would have been in time," sighed Harry.

"Come, we will search the river front and send out a general alarm. God grant that we may not be too late."

They could not tell whether the woman had taken a car, or if she had stopped somewhere on the route, but they felt that she could not be far away, and that a gain of a few minutes only might result in her capture.

They presently reached a place where there were few houses, the majority of the buildings being mostly stores and factories, with here and there an occasional drinking place.

It was now quite dark, but, as Harry and his friends paused under a street lamp to look about, a woman was seen to leave a saloon three or four hundred feet ahead of them, cross the street rapidly, and enter a yard where there were a lot of sheds piled high with oil barrels.

There was an oil works next to the yard, and its own dock was right upon the water.

"Dere she is now!" cried Fritz.

The three friends hastened after her, and Harry, who was in advance, reached the fence just as a gate was shut in his face.

There was a sharp click, and the young fellow knew that the gate had been locked.

"Stop!" he cried. "We know you, and the police are on your track."

"I care neither for you nor them," answered the woman, hurrying away. "I shall defeat you yet."

"How much do you demand for the child's ransom?" cried Harry.

"More than you can pay!" hissed Kate, whom Harry had recognized by her voice. "If you meddle further in my affairs you will never see her again."

Then she hurried away and disappeared behind a shed which seemed to be empty.

At that moment Fritz and Abner came up.

"Run for a policeman, Mr. Snaggs!" cried Harry. "Fritz, there is another gate further down. Go to it and stop the woman's escape."

"Ya! I bet you!" cried Fritz, as he hurried away.

At that moment a tongue of flame appeared above the vacant shed.

"Fire!" screamed Harry.

The flames spread with the rapidity of lightning, and by their light Harry could see the woman hurrying away.

She was alone.

"My God! she has set fire to the sheds and left the poor child to perish."

Then he climbed upon the gate by the cross-pieces and soon reached the top.

In an instant he had dropped to the ground on the other side.

Kate Pritchard had not purposely fired the shed.

When she came from the saloon she brought a piece of candle with her and this she lighted as she reached the shed.

She had left Florence there a few minutes before, intending to change the latter's clothes so that she would not be recognized, and thus hide in some obscure place along the docks.

Florence recovered from the stupor into which she had been thrown by the drugs Kate had administered just as the woman appeared.

The child sprang up, tried to run away, fell against Kate, and knocked the lighted candle out of her hand.

It fell between two oil-soaked boards at the side of the shed, and they at once took fire.

In an instant the fire had run up the side and burst out at the roof.

The wind fanned the flames and instantly the shed was a mass of fire.

Kate uttered a hoarse cry and hurried away, leaving Florence alone.

Almost before one could think the fire had been communicated to an oil tank, twenty feet away.

"Fire!" screamed Harry, and the cry was taken up from the street.

He dashed forward, pulling off his coat as he ran, and in a few seconds he reached the shed.

"Florence!" he cried, in an agony of despair.

"Uncle Harry!" cried the child, rushing into his arms.

Kate had disappeared, but Harry cared nothing for her now.

He threw his coat around the thinly-clad form of the child, and hurried from the dangerous locality.

Between him and the street there was now a wall of fire.

Safety lay in the direction of the river, and only there.

The flames were spreading along the ground and overhead.

The river was his only refuge.

It was his intention to plunge into the stream and let the current out of danger.

When he reached the end of the pier, however, he saw a boat containing a pair of oars moored just beneath him.

To spring aboard and cast off was the work of a moment.

Seizing the oars he pulled out into the stream.

At that moment there was a loud report.

The oil tank had exploded.

Instantly the burning oil poured out in a flood of living fire. It rushed across the pier and fell upon the water.

A cloud of stifling smoke and steam arose, but the oil was not extinguished.

Instead it converted the water into a river of fire.

The burning flood poured into the river and the waters were now all aflame.

"My God!" cried Harry, as he strained every nerve, "what can save me now?"

The burning oil spread rapidly over the water, chasing the boat as though determined upon its destruction.

If once that fiery flood reached him the boy was lost.

"Oh, Uncle Harry," cried Florence, "it is burning hot and the smoke chokes me. Where are we?"

"On a river of fire!" whispered the boy. "God alone can save us."

He tugged at the oars, making the boat fairly fly over the waters, but faster and faster yet came that stream of fire and death stared him in the face.

His clothes were scorched with the awful heat, the glare of the flames blinded him, the waves were all aflame behind him, and on one side, but he rowed as he never had rowed, and the oars creaked as he put his strength upon them.

It was not his own life that he thought of; that of the child was far more precious, and he would have died that she might be saved.

The child kneeled upon the thwart in front of him, without

a word, clasped her hands together, and prayed for Harry's safety, not her own.

The boy, glancing over his shoulder, saw her, and a new courage inspired him.

The flames had reached the stern of the boat, and were lapping the sides, but there was still a glimmer of hope.

"I will save her now!" he hissed, "if I must cross an ocean of flames! God give me strength to fulfil the task!"

CHAPTER XXI.

OUT OF THE FIRE.

Never before had Harry Farley been in such peril of his life.

The waves, all aflame with the burning oil, pursued him relentlessly.

All around him the river was on fire.

Great masses of burning oil ran from the blades of his oars, they leaped upon the gunwale, they gathered around the bow, they hissed over the stern.

He was on a river of fire, and, row as he would, he seemed unable to escape.

Out toward midstream he rowed, hoping to distance the fiery current.

As he shot into midchannel he realized that a change had taken place.

The current had been going downstream when he embarked in the boat.

It was now running upstream, and he was saved.

The flames and smoke were carried away from him, for he now pulled against the stream instead of with it.

The tide had turned, and the struggle was over.

The floating oil now went up the river instead of down, and the danger had passed.

Harry watched the awful sight in silence as he pulled for the New York side, the burning oil-works throwing a bright glare out upon the water, the flame-tipped waves increasing the weird effect.

It would be useless to land at any point near the fire, and Harry resolved to go at once to New York and communicate with his friends.

"Fritz and Snaggs must have seen me when I took the boat," he mused, "or certainly when I was racing with the fire, and they will return at once. However, supposing that they did not reach the wharf in time, they must think that I have perished, and will remain on the spot until all hope of my being alive has gone. I cannot return by way of the river, but I can send word the moment I reach New York that I am safe."

The current was running strong, and he was forced to bear over toward the New York side in order to make any headway against it.

The nearer he went to the shore, however, the more speed he could make, and at last he landed, well up-town, but safe.

Leaving the boat floating at the end of a pier, he walked along till he came to the street, leading Florence by the hand.

Taking a car of the Belt line, he went at once to the house of Fritz Strauss, where Mrs. Strauss was anxiously awaiting the arrival of someone.

It was long after eleven o'clock, but the store was lighted up as usual, Mrs. Strauss being afraid to close.

"Oh, begorrah, is it ye at last, Masther Harry?" she exclaimed, when Harry entered, "and the choild, too, thank the saints! But phwativer have yez been doin'? Sure, the shirt is nearly burned off yer back, and yer face and hands luck loike biled lobstheres."

Harry related his adventures briefly, and then said:

"You have heard nothing of Fritz or Mr. Snaggs?"

"No, faix, but I know that——"

"Jee whizz, Fritz! there he is naow!" Abner was heard to say at that moment. "Told ye he'd be here. The feller on the ferryboat what said he seen the boy was right, arter all."

"Ya, I tink so myselluf," answered Fritz, coming in with Abner. "How you was, Harry? Chiminies, dot was a fire once! I beirned my whitzkers off mein face, und Sniggs, he was putty vell bald-headed mit dem blazes."

"Did you see the woman, Mrs. Pritchard, after the fire?"

"Nein; I don't saw dot vomans. Maybe she was beirn up."

"I am afraid so, although she may have escaped."

"And sarve her right if she did burn up," said Abner.

"No, I cannot say that," returned Harry. "Bad as she was, I would not wish her such a fate."

"Waal, you're safe, anyhow, and so is Florence, and if the woman got away it's more'n she deserved; but it's quite likely that she's burned to a cinder. The works was burned up, and the docks was all cleared away, and a lot o' vessels with 'em, and for a spell there was the old scratch to pay. It wasn't all over when we came away, but the wust of it was."

"Sure, yez can't think of going away the night," said Mrs. Strauss. "It's nearly midnight. Come into the sittin'-room and make yerself easy. Go run for a pitcher av beer, Fritz, before Geldmacher shuts up, and I'll shut up here while ye're gone."

It was nearly morning before the elder members of the party retired, for the adventures of the night had to be discussed, and Mrs. Strauss made acquainted with all the particulars before she would rest.

In the morning Harry went to the bank where he kept his own savings, drew out enough to meet his immediate needs, and took rooms in a different part of the city from where he had lived.

The banking house of Maberly, Heaton & Co. was reported to be in good financial condition once more, and Sydney Heaton was one of the pets of society.

Harry also learned that he himself was supposed to have made restitution to the bank, and to have gone to some foreign country where he would endeavor to lead a new life.

He also heard that Sydney Heaton was to give a reception to his friends on a certain evening, being the birthday of his wife, and that the best families of New York would be present.

"Sydney Heaton must remove the stain which rests on my character, must acknowledge Florence as his child, and repair the wrong done to Blanche Maberly," mused Harry. "If he

refuses then I will denounce him to the world as a scoundrel." Harry had determined to attend the reception of Heaton's, and in the meantime he made his preparations.

On the night of the birthday fete Sydney Heaton's spacious residence was aglow with lights, and everywhere scenes of enchantment presented themselves.

The conservatory was a marvel of beauty, the drawing-room was like a hall in some fairy palace, and from top to bottom of the house all was gaiety.

There was another person besides Harry Farley who, although not invited to the fete, had determined to be present.

This was the woman known as Kate Pritchard.

Fortune had not dealt as well by her as she could wish, and she was sadly in need of funds.

She had escaped in the very nick, at the time of the fire at Greenpoint, and supposed, with others, that Harry and the child had perished.

With the death of the child and the absence of documentary evidence, Watkins having stolen her papers, Kate's chances of getting money out of Heaton seemed small.

The woman was bold, however, and would not hesitate to push her claim, even if she had nothing to substantiate it.

She had obtained money from Heaton before, and was resolved to do so again, knowing his weak side, and that he would pay anything rather than be exposed.

There was another side to the case, however, and this seemed to offer greater advantages.

Instead of bleeding Heaton, she would appeal directly to the wife, who had more money than Heaton, and more at stake, society compelling woman to keep her reputation more unsullied than a man need to.

The fete had nearly reached its height when a servant handed Blanche a letter, saying that the writer was waiting for an answer.

The letter was in a feminine handwriting, and ran as follows:

"Madame.—I am in possession of secrets which concern your good name and that of your husband. If you think it's worth anything to you, please grant me an interview.—A Friend."

"What can this mean?" thought Blanche. "No friend would write and not sign a name."

"Is there any answer?" asked the servant.

"No," said Blanche, haughtily. "Tell the person who gave you this that I have nothing to say."

In the meantime Heaton had gone to the conservatory to gain a rest of a few minutes, and compose his nerves.

Notwithstanding his success, he could not prevent a guilty feeling from stealing over him at times, and now, surrounded by every luxury and flattered by friends, there was a sensation of unrest in his heart, and he desired to be alone.

He had been in the conservatory but a few moments when his father entered.

"Ah, Sydney, my boy," said the old man, "this is a night of triumph, is it not?"

"I wish I could think so," returned Sydney, uneasily.

"Why, what have you to fear? A fortunate rise in stocks has enabled me to pay my indebtedness to you and leave me far in advance myself; no one suspects any wrong, young Farley is dead, in all probability, and we are both on the high road to fortune."

"I am not satisfied that young Farley is dead. He may turn up at any moment."

"Nonsense! Your man out West would prevent that."

"I have heard nothing from Watkins since he went away, nor from his associate. My letters to them have been returned, and I am in as much uncertainty as ever."

"Oh, well, I suppose they killed the boy and are afraid to show themselves. You had nothing to do with that, so you need not be uneasy."

"But I am uneasy and you ought to be, as well."

"I?" said old Heaton in a surprised tone.

"Yes, you. I suppose you remember that you put a name other than your own to certain notes of hand not long ago."

"H'm, yes; I may have been indiscreet in that respect, Sydney, but it is all right; the notes have all been taken up and destroyed."

"Excuse me, they have not all been taken up. One for five thousand dollars is in the hands of a broker in this city. I have just learned this to-night."

"Oh, well," answered the other, "old Maberly is so erratic, so peculiar that he can't swear whether he signed it or not; and anyhow I suppose we can buy the paper up?"

"We might if it was the only one, but since your last attempt in that line you have been repeating the offense."

"How do you know this?" demanded the other, turning pale.

"I know it, and that is sufficient. You promised me after young Farley went away that there would be no more of this business. You have not kept your word."

"Oh, well, the whole of them don't amount to much. I can pay them off easily enough."

"But suppose someone else presents them for discount? Discovery must follow at last."

"Oh, you are exciting yourself needlessly," said the old rascal, in a tone meant to be bantering. "Come, you must rejoin your guests, or your absence will be noticed."

The two men went off arm-in-arm, and a moment later a figure in black stepped from behind a huge cluster of palms.

"So, that was worth hearing," muttered Kate, for she was the listener. "It ought to be worth something, even if my lady does refuse to see me. Ha! she must have repented of her hasty decision, for here she comes."

At that moment Blanche entered the conservatory in search of her husband.

"You have come to grant me an interview, I presume?" said Kate, as Blanche started.

"Then you are the author of the note I received just now?"

"Yes."

"I told you I had nothing to say."

"I think you have," returned Kate, with a dangerous look in her eyes. "Are you aware that your husband, as you call him, had another wife living at the time of your wedding?"

Blanche turned deathly white, and sank into a seat while Kate looked triumphant.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

"My dear, what has happened? Who is this person?"

It was Sydney Heaton who spoke, having returned to the conservatory after his wife.

Blanche arose, looked him full in the face and said:

"Deny this person's statement, deny that you were married and had a wife living at the time you were married to me."

"Impossible!" cried old Heaton, entering at the moment.

Sydney Heaton flushed, gasped for breath, then summoned all his nerve and said firmly:

"The woman lies!"

"Excuse me, Mr. Heaton, but I know that she speaks the truth."

It was Harry Farley who spoke these words, as he entered from the ball-room.

He was in full evening dress, and looked more handsome than ever as he stood facing the man who had plotted against his life.

"What this lady says is the truth, Mr. Heaton," he repeated. "You did have a wife living when you married Miss Maberly, and she was my sister."

Blanche looked from one to the other, and said in a whisper:

"Sydney Heaton, as you hope for salvation, will you swear——"

"It's all too absurd," broke in old Heaton. "Of course, Sydney was never married before. I ought to know."

"He was known as Richard Norman, and the record of his marriage is to be found in the office of the county clerk in South Mitchim, Maine."

"It is a lie!" hissed Heaton. "I was never known as Richard Norman."

"Waal, jee whizz! I reckon yu was, and I kin prove it!" said a new voice, as Abner Snaggs stepped from behind a heavy drapery, where Harry had placed him a few minutes before.

"I don't know you, sir," muttered Heaton.

"Waal, neow, I think yu du, and, jee whizz! I can find plenty more as du. I was at yure weddin' and can swear tu yu and to yure child."

"And I will swear that my sister lived half an hour after your marriage to Miss Maberly," said Harry.

"Leave this house, all of you!" cried old Heaton, in a rage.

"Excuse me, sir, this is my house," said Blanche, "and these people are my guests as long as I choose to consider them such."

"You can't bluff me, you old villain," said Kate, defiantly.

"I know something that will put you in jail, and——"

"I don't think that you are the proper person to make threats, Mrs. Pritchard," interrupted Harry. "You did your

best to destroy the life of my little niece last night, and, but for the intervention of Providence, would have succeeded. I cannot order you from this house, but if you remain in this city twenty-four hours longer you will be arrested for blackmail, abduction, and sundry other crimes."

Kate gave Harry a look of sullen defiance, gathered her wraps about her, and left the place.

Old Heaton was pacing uneasily up and down in the rear of the place. Heaton sat on a divan, his head buried in his hands, and Blanche stood gazing blankly at Harry.

"Mrs. Heaton," said the latter, "I did not come here to throw discredit or shame upon you. I came for justice, and I would have spared you if I could. My sister was that man's lawful wife, and this is his child."

At the same instant Abner pushed aside the heavy draperies at the entrance and led Florence forward.

She was dressed in white; her golden hair fell all about her head like a halo, while her sweet, sad face gave her the look rather of an angel than of a child of earth.

"She is blind?" said Blanche, half inquiringly, and with a touch of pity in her tone.

"Yes, but the doctors tell me that there is considerable hope of her being able to recover her sight."

"You poor darling!" cried Blanche, kneeling on the tiled floor and drawing the child to her in a close embrace. "I will be a mamma to you, my pretty pet."

"You will not take me away from Uncle Harry, will you?" asked Florence simply, "or let those bad men try to hurt him any more?"

"No, dearest, you shall not leave him, and he will be perfectly safe with me."

"But my papa was a bad papa, and tried to have Uncle Harry hurt," continued Florence. "Do you know him? They used to call him Richard Norman; but then he went into a bank and stole a lot of money and said that Uncle Harry stole it, but he didn't——"

"Do not heed her, Mrs. Heaton," said Harry, interrupting. "She has confused things sadly, I fear."

"Mr. Farley," said Blanche, "I know enough of my father's and Mr. Heaton's business to know that you were accused of a crime which I never believed you committed, nor did my father believe it, but, being an old man, he left the management of the bank almost entirely to Mr. Heaton."

"I am glad to know that Mr. Maberly believed me innocent," said Harry, with a smile.

"Jee whizz, ma'am, yu won't find an honest young man from Maine to Californy, and I've been all over the route, ma'am, than young Harry Farley, yu won't, jee whizz!" said Abner, who had been silent longer than usual.

"I believe it," said Blanche, rising, but still holding Florence's hand, "and, since this accusation was brought against him, my father has been investigating his past, and not only does he find that it is irreproachable, but he also discovers that those whom he considered honest have resorted to forgery and other expedients, not only to blacken the young man's character, but to enrich——"

Old Heaton had suddenly disappeared, but it was not that which caused Blanche to pause.

It was a sudden exclamation from Abner Snaggs.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but something seems wrong," he suddenly cried, pointing to Sydney Heaton.

The man had been sitting motionless for some minutes, but a peculiar look upon his face had attracted Abner's attention.

Blanche and Harry sprang to his side, and Abner attempted to raise his head.

It fell back the moment it was released, and a red spot on the man's shirt bosom and the rigid look of the features told only too plain a tale.

Sydney Heaton was dead.

Vengeance had overtaken him at last.

"Dead!" muttered Blanche. "Well, perhaps it is better so. But I could never have wished it."

The guests were dismissed, and none of them ever knew what had really happened in the conservatory that night.

Sydney Heaton was buried without the least pomp or ostentation, and his secret was buried with him, only the few persons present at the grave knowing the truth.

Old Mr. Heaton disappeared from the city on the day following the reception, and it was reported that he had gone to Europe for his health.

Mr. Maberly paid off the forged notes, and there was no scandal, no sensational news of any kind, for Blanche was to be considered, and any rumor that reflected unfavorably upon either of the Heaton's would injure her.

The old scoundrel and hypocrite, who had been the cause of all his son's troubles, remained abroad, and to this day has not reappeared.

Kate Pritchard also went away, having no desire to figure in the police-court, and nothing has since been heard of her.

Abner Snaggs returned to South Mitchim, Maine, in a few days, but he often visits New York and always calls on his old friend, Fritz Strauss, who still carries on business at the old stand, and is in a fair way of retiring with a fortune.

True to her promise, Blanche became a mother to little Florence, and gave the child all the love and tenderness she could bestow.

It was indeed a happy day, when, a year later, Florence was able to see those whom she loved, and to know that the darkness in which she had lived so long would never return.

She is now a beautiful young lady, and no one who sees her happy face and hears her merry laugh would ever dream that her early life had been such a sad one.

She is happiest, however, when her Uncle Harry is with her, and Harry gives all the time he can spare from business to her, and tries to make her life one long ray of happiness.

The affairs of the bank were in time relieved from the confused state into which they had fallen, and to-day Harry Farley is at the head of the establishment, representing the interests of Blanche, and himself making an excellent living by his strict attention to business.

Rube Sturgis never appeared in the East and no search was made for him in the West, and his share of the knowledge of the crimes of the Heaton's, and the plot against Harry Farley has never brought him in a dollar so far that we know, and it is not likely that they ever will.

Harry Farley's day of triumph came at last, and now, blessed with health, wealth, a host of friends, and the love of those dear to him, he looks forward hopefully to the future, and has no regret for the past when he was engaged in a bitter fight against the world, and when fate sent him to the help of those he loved, Out In the Streets.

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